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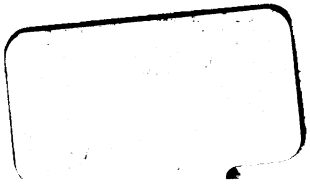
THE MAN AND THE ROSE

HANSON PUTKER SCHUMANN

1. Poetry, American



To Mrs. A. L. Dunphy.

From

Alanson Tucker Schumann.

October, 1915.

NBI

Schumann.

THE MAN AND THE ROSE

ALANSON TUCKER SCHUMANN

BOSTON
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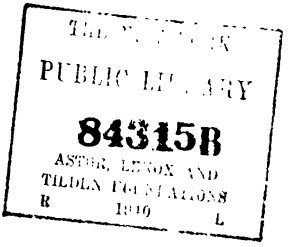

The Gorham Press, Boston, U. S. A.

My Mother, I inscribe this book to thee;
Well knowing it would give thee bitter pain
To hurt the little children of my brain
That live among its leaves, even though they be
Dwarfed, immature, deficient in the free
Full excellence which ampler growths attain:
But as they are, small seeds of feeble grain,
I place them in thy dear hands trustingly.

As lovely Lund's warm soft kiss unsealed
The fetters of Endymion's trancèd sleep
To make the boy uplift his wondrous eyes,
So thoughts upon these pages stand revealed,
Which slumbered in the bud till caused to leap
To sudden bloom by thy sweet sympathies.

WOR 19 FEB '36

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THE MAN AND THE ROSE

The rose that you gave me I prize overmuch,
Its petals are thrilled with your sensitive touch,
Its perfume reveals what your fond spirit saith,
Your soul is its beautiful, exquisite breath.

In its opulent life is a hint of decay,
Its ardor endures but a brief summer's day;
Its glory is gone, its mission is done,
Ere the stars give place to the splendid sun.

As the life of the rose is the life of the man,
Save that he has the hope of an ampler span;
To-day he bustles about at his will,
To-morrow, perchance, he is utterly still.

And what is the fate of the man and the rose,
When the life that we see has come to its close?
If the man have the joy of eternity's dower,
Shall the same gracious boon be denied to the flower?

THE SACRED STORY

The Story was told
  For fact, not for fable:
In language of gold
The Story was told,
By men honor-bold,
  Love-ardent and able:
The Story was told
  For fact, not for fable.

In the hush of the night
  Lay the Babe in the manger;
Shepherds saw a great light
In the hush of the night;
Even Time stayed his flight
  To welcome the stranger;
In the hush of the night
  Lay the Babe in the manger.

Safe-led by a star,
  The Wise Men have found Him:
They journeyed from far,
Safe-led by a star.—
How humble they are!
  With gifts they surround Him.—
Safe-led by a star,
  The Wise Men have found Him.

Breathing Nazareth's air,
  As a sensitive child would,—
Of His birth unaware,
Breathing Nazareth's air,
His happy feet fare
  To the neighboring wildwood,—
Breathing Nazareth's air,
  As a sensitive child would.

Over woodland and lea,
  A lad now, He wandered;
Birds and brooks voice their glee
Over woodland and lea;
On the soul-life to be
  His lofty mind pondered;—
Over woodland and lea,
  A lad now, He wandered.

At the age of twelve years,
  In the temple He tarried:
His wisdom appears
At the age of twelve years:
Amazed were the seers
  At the knowledge He carried:
At the age of twelve years,
  In the temple He tarried.

When His life dwelt aloft
  With the love-central fire,—
On His ravished ear oft,
When His life dwelt aloft,
Strains ineffably soft
  Fell from angel-swept lyre,—
When His life dwelt aloft
  With the love-central fire.

To the river He went,
  The Baptist baptized Him;
On His mission intent,
To the river He went,—
By the All-Father sent—
  How the All-Father prized Him!—
To the river He went,
  The Baptist baptized Him.

His labor begun,
  He brooked no delaying;
He left naught undone,
His labor begun:
His disciples He won,—
  They loved Him, obeying.
His labor begun,
  He brooked no delaying.

When the multitude came,
  He patiently taught them;
His words were like flame
When the multitude came;
To a sense of sin's shame
  He tenderly brought them;
When the multitude came,
  He patiently taught them.

On the Galilee lake
  He stilled the loud billows —
When the wild tempest brake
On the Galilee lake.—
The crew ceased to quake,
  They returned to their pillows.—
On the Galilee lake
  He stilled the loud billows.

His faithful friend dead,
  To the hurt home He hastened.
Those few words He said.—
His faithful friend, dead,
Regained the life fled,
  And Martha was chastened.
His faithful friend dead,
  To the hurt home He hastened.

Betrayed by a kiss
In Gethsemane's garden!
O the anguish!—the bliss!—
Betrayed by a kiss!
At the mob's howl and hiss,
The soldiers' hearts harden!
Betrayed by a kiss
In Gethsemane's garden!

In the dim judgment-hall
Stands the luminous Master—
'Mid the indecent brawl
In the dim judgment-hall—
Serene through it all,—
How dire the disaster!
In the dim judgment-hall
Stands the luminous Master.

With a plaiting of thorns
They cruelly crowned Him.
A mark for men's scorns
With a plaiting of thorns!
Tossed on hate's savage horns,
Angels crowded around Him.
With a plaiting of thorns
They cruelly crowned Him.

Upon the coarse wood
They brutally nailed Him.
Their taunts He withstood
Upon the coarse wood:
He prayed for their good
When they mockingly hailed Him.
Upon the coarse wood
They brutally nailed Him.

Fierce fire rent the sky—
  The daylight diminished!
Earth groaned far and nigh—
Fierce fire rent the sky!
Hark!—the conquering cry
  From the cross, "It is finished!"—
Fierce fire rent the sky—
  The daylight diminished!

The first at the tomb
  Was the Magdalen holy—
In the dawn's lifting gloom
The first at the tomb!
Down her cheek's tender bloom
  A tear trickled slowly.
The first at the tomb
  Was the Magdalen holy.

The others have fled
  In frightened behavior.
She seeks her dear dead—
The others have fled.
From His lowly, chill bed
  Gone—gone is her Saviour!
The others have fled
  In frightened behavior.

He is risen to-day!
  How sweet is the Story!
The Life and the Way,
He is risen to-day!
Clouds cloven and gray
  Do but screen the Sun's glory!—
He is risen to-day!
  How sweet is the Story!

Let the jubilee swell!
  Shout, ye hills and ye mountains!
Sing, valley and dell!
Let the jubilee swell!
Ring! ring! merry bell!—
  Leap higher, ye fountains!
Let the jubilee swell!
  Shout, ye hills and ye mountains!

The forty days past,
  He gently ascended.
Scene loveliest and last,
The forty days past:—
Blow the glad trumpet-blast
  For Heaven and Earth blended!
The forty days past,
  He gently ascended.

The Spirit remains,
  Though He hath departed!
Till the final moon wanes,
The Spirit remains:—
It frees from sin's stains,
  It cheers the faint-hearted!
The Spirit remains
  Though He hath departed!

SONNETS

UNWRITTEN SONGS

O poet who hath never writ a line,
  How purposeful must be thy pleasant days!
  No care hast thou for the scant words of praise,
Which to uplift and to deject combine.
The soul's unaging utterance is thine,
  To voice the witchery of the sunset ways—
  The golden purples vanishing to grays
And twilight pathos of remote star-shine.

Thy songs unwritten sing to thy glad heart.
  Thou hast no use for time-consuming pen.
    Thy greatness only to thyself is known.
Why shouldst thou from thy wonder-visions part!
  Thou wouldst but yearn to have them back again.
    O poet, keep them! they are thine alone.

OCEAN

Before me ocean in its vastness lies,
  Unwearied by perpetual ebb and flow:
  Out on its billowy plains the great ships go,
To vanish in the blue of shoreless skies;
O'erhead the circling sea-gull with glad cries
  Proclaims his liberty; the keen winds blow
  The shreds of salty spray; and to and fro
The golden arrowy gleaming sunlight flies.

I pace the smooth soft-yielding shore, and see
  The wet sand whiten from the pressing heel.
    And the lone crags their jagged arms outreach:
The billows, rolling landward ceaselessly,
  Exhaust themselves in shallow waves that feel
    With quick foam-fingers up the shining beach.

AT TINTAGEL

(For a Picture)

Before me in its crumbling grandeur lies
  King Arthur's castle by the Western sea,
  Upon a cliff that rises raggedly
From the wild waters to the wistful skies.
A last-left link of ancient centuries,
  A royal relic for the years to be,
  It stands untenanted; in mocking glee,
Above the near, foamed beach a white gull flies.

And over all the artist's hand has drawn
  A vague mysterious visionary veil—
    The dimness of an antique atmosphere,
Where Fancy's eye beholds a crimson dawn,
  And Lancelot kneeling passion-weakened, pale,
    To the warm loveliness of Guinevere.

BERKSHIRE HILLS

Empurpled, stern, imperially grand,
  Against the azure of the arching skies,
  Yon giant hills in solemn silence rise,
The guardians of the fruitful valley-land:
Storm-scarred, immovable, broad-based they stand;
  Around their tops the wreathing vapor lies,
  Touched with the sunlight's softly-golden dyes,
And into weird aërial motion fanned.

What fierce convulsions of earth's inner fire
  Upheaved these massive monuments of stone!
    Proud landmarks of the centuries to be,
Bold trusty sentinels that never tire,
  Unchiselled cenotaphs of ages flown,
    Majestic in their calm eternity!

THE VOICES OF THE SEA

How various are the voices of the deep:
  The whisper of the surf upon the shore;
  On the dread reef the breakers' hungry roar;
The lulling undersong that tells of sleep;
The baffled howl of surges as they leap
  To the calm skies; the murmur evermore
  Of waves that neither sway nor swing nor soar,
But into some inscrutable cavern creep.

Falling tumultuously upon the sands,
  The ocean makes a music all his own—
    A symphony superb, triumphant, free;
And when, aroused, his mighty breast expands,
  He utters an imperial organ-tone
    Of immemorial solemnity.

THE RICHES OF THE SEA

How countless are the riches of the deep:
  Lost treasures lie upon his viewless floor—
  Perchance the crown some ancient empress wore,
Of gold and glitter one great gorgeous heap.
No human toil shall these quaint marvels reap,
  Even though the weary world be aged and hoar;
  The ocean shall retain his garnered store
So long as his broad billows heave and sweep.

But when benign Omnipotence commands
  Thy rolling waters to be backward thrown,
    And thou shalt vanish, O majestic sea!
Where now thy tides conceal strange underlands,
  Each precious gleaming jewel will be shown
    In all its loveliness and mystery.

NATURE'S LAST FLICKER

The gaunt trees naked stand; the dead leaves lie
  And stir and rustle in the piercing chill,
  In hurried tumult they forsake the hill,
Or flutter to the brook that shivers by;
Bleak vapors wreathe and circle in the sky;
  From out the ragged shrub the snow-bird's trill,
  A frosty treble tremulously shrill,
Blends with the moaning of the wind's weird sigh.

On crooked scant-clad branches upward spread
  Blooms the strange yellow hazel, braving death—
  Nature's last flicker to repel the breath
Of cruel iciness. Lo, life is fled!
  Now Winter hastens to the mournful scene,
  And shrouds in white the ashes of the green.

PUGET SOUND

Broad, deep, and beautiful the waters lie,
  With scarce a motion of their gleaming breast.
  The sun is golden in the golden west,
The day is done, and the dim night is nigh.
Upon the azure of the eastern sky
  The twilight's dusky hues are manifest,
  While the fair clouds that near the day-star rest
Are bright with colors that persuade the eye.

The tints, combining, shifting, come and go—
  Imperial purple, lingering the last,
    Fades to a permanence of final gray.
Now one by one the stars emerge and glow,
  And now the moon, the pensive gloaming past,
    Relumes the heavens and glorifies the bay.

NASTURTIUMS

Adown the stone-wall in the summer days,
The dear nasturtiums trail their tangled vines.
Their petals orange are, as are the wines
Of the warm south; or crimson, as the blaze
That fires the dawn; or golden, like the haze
When sunset colors burn; or, veined with lines
Of twilight purple, their quick scarlet shines;
And all are flecked and dashed with browns and grays.

And when the autumn comes, and the frost nips
The pansy, sweet-pea, rose, and other flowers,
Touching the aster to a quivered fear—
These blossom-children whisper with brave lips:
"We scorn the chill of the September hours!
Even October finds us happy here!"

LOVE THAT IS LOVE

Love is not love that loves not when bleak age
Gnaws the life's vigor with unpitying tooth,
And deadens the resourcefulness of youth,
And makes the clown the comrade of the sage.
By change we live. As in a book each page
Is diverse in its action, so, forsooth,
Each heart-throb speaks for jollity or ruth,
For strength or weakness, for repose or rage.

Why should you tell me that on such a day
I was to you as fragrant as the breath
Of the pure flower whose beauty hasteneth
By its own blossoming its own decay?
Love that is love defies and conquers death—
It greatens though the worlds be swept away.

THOU ART DIVINE

Incomparable man, we bow to thee,
  Caring not when, or where, or how thy birth;
  Thy precious feet once trod the teeming earth—
What matter if they walked the rolling sea?
From thy sweet presence sin was forced to flee,
  Thou broughtest cheer to homes of ruth and dearth,
  The friend thou wast of children and of mirth,
Thy mission was assured by God's decree.

We honor thee, we love thee, we obey;
  Whate'er we have or hope to have is thine;
Thou goest with us through the garish day,
  And through the night when stars do flash and shine;
Our strength thou art, our faith, our guide, our way—
  Thou art immaculate, thou art divine.

THE NORTH STAR

It shines amid the dim inscrutable skies
  Of the cold North, whereof no annals are,
  The constant clear inviolable star
On which the patient mariner relies.
Divinely sent, its gracious message flies,
  Soft flashing like some slender scimitar,
  Down dreamless voids, incalculably far,
To give to earth a pledge that never dies.

Fair friend, in awed conjecturings we ask
  What splendid system circles round thy blaze,
    What mighty peoples live within thy light?
But unavailing the stupendous task.
  Our queries vanish as dissolving haze,
    Thy distance bars Imagination's flight.

MOUNT SHASTA

We go from Redding through the lesser hills
  Amid the mistiness of early day;
  As onward, upward, skyward is our way,
The heart beats quicker and the bosom thrills.
We pass the gleam of the impetuous rills,
  Which down the precipices jagged, gray,
  Tumble and dash, and toss their beaded spray,
To find some level which their ardor stills.

Now near the loftier wilder heights we are,
  And mighty Shasta comes upon the view;
  He gives the lower peaks a stern adieu,
And strives to reach some splendid silent star,
  Which, though unseen, shines down the spacious
    blue
From its imperial station high and far.

CEASE, MIGHTY SEA, TO MURMUR

Cease, mighty sea, to murmur! Moan no more!
  For I would have enfranchisement from pain:
  Than the insistence of thy saddened strain,
Better the surges' internecine roar;
Better the billows thundering up the shore
  And the foiled hiss of their spent backward drain,
  Mocked by the gull that seeks the surly main
To curve, to poise, to dip, to lightly soar.

The wear of the incessant fret and sob,
  The hurts that harass and the cares that crush,
    Are tyrants that we cringe to and obey:
Better the revel, the passionate engine-throb,
  The turbulence, the tension, the thrilled hush,
    The toss tumultuous of life's swirling spray.

THE EARTH

Two travellers meeting upon Mars, one said—
  Our world hung lustrous when their day was done,
  Flashed by the beams of the resplendent sun—
"Think you bright Terra is inhabited?"
And so, by similar conjecturings led,
  When earth's majestic evening is begun,
  Our queries oftentimes in this wise run:—
"Do human feet Mars' mystic valleys tread?"

Kind mother Earth, of thee what do we know
  Save that we strangely breathe thy generous air,
    Striving life's purpose and life's cause to learn?
And of those charming other worlds that glow
  Above us in the splendid silence there
    The tidings never come for which we yearn.

A HUMMING-BIRD

In early summer's soft luxurious days,
  When nature is full clad in leaf and flower
  That freshen at the touch of pearly shower
And stir and glimmer where the zephyr strays—
In whirring quivering poise a bright form plays,
  Amid the twilight's briefly-golden hour,
  In lightning zigzags near the fragrant bower
And on some bloom's delicious sweetness preys.

Did some rare, oddly painted pansy try
  With limitless desire to leave its stem
    Till it was free and fluttered into you?
Or did some rainbow in the southern sky
  Detach a fragment from its radiant hem,
    That, falling, to a living opal grew?

PROGRESS

Have they on the fourth planet from the sun
  Answered the questions which we vainly ask?
  Did life with them begin its endless task
Before life on the earth-world was begun?
Have they by eons of stern progress won
  Truths which we seek? Have they upraised the
    mask
  Which yet for us is down? And do they bask
In the pure light of work supremely done?

We know not: but we have good faith to know
  That in the earth's august and fuller years,
    When that which is withheld is not denied;
That though he struggle through wastes of ice and
    snow,
  Through places of sorrow and strange lands of
    fears,
    Man ultimately will be deified.

SUGGESTION

Inviolable and serene it stands,
  A massive pyramid against the sky;
  Its summit dwells in light and Deity,
Fit place for issuance of God's commands.
The shadowy vapors clasp it like dim hands;
  Above it shapes of shifting cloudland lie;
  Only the eagle to its top may fly;
Its lofty grandeur scorns the valley-lands.

Then comes to me the retrospective thought
  That this imperial landmark was the same
    When the glad world was thrilled with voice
      divine—
That its far peak dawn's primal crimson caught
  While earth was haloed with the purer flame
    Of Him who walked the ways of Palestine.

THE LIFE OF THE VALLEY-LILY

When snows are here the valley-lily sleeps —
  It does not die, as we are used to say,
  It merely knows 'tis time to go away,
So down its stem to its kind roots it creeps.
Half roused, perchance it hears the wind that sweeps
  Over the cold white world, and feels the sway
  Of the trees grinding branches bare and gray.
It dreams, may be; it surely never weeps.

And when Spring comes, and suns are warm, it wakes,
  And looks about its cosy little room,
And leaves its bed, and its glad journey takes
  Through corridors of ever-lessening gloom
Into the splendid light, and buds, and breaks
  With no sound and no effort into bloom.

A FLUTE UPON THE WATERS

A summer's eve beneath the restful trees:
  A lilied lake, dim, shadow-pencilled, still;
  And long lithe grasses crowning yonder hill,
Gracefully poised, unkissed by wandering breeze.
Through parted leafiness the gazer sees
  Those orbs whose awful interspaces thrill
  The soul,—keen points of liquid fire that fill
The boundless blue with circling mysteries.

But list!—sweet sounds of music touch the ear
  In soft vibrations tremulously low;
Strains pleading tenderly, tones pearly-clear,
  In undulations of aërial flow.
A flute upon the waters!—dip of oars,
And moonlight sleeping on the silver shores.

THE CONJUNCTION OF JUPITER AND VENUS

The two immortals fain would touch to-night,
  Suspended in the far celestial air:
  The god omnipotent, the goddess rare,
Each circled with a halo of fine light.
Ineffably and gloriously bright
  Through the inscrutable voids of space they fare,
  Until to meet and kiss and part they dare
That earth may thrill and quiver at the sight.

The god once ruled the world our footsteps press,
  The goddess walked its ways as Beauty's queen,
    Now, from the hushed and omnipresent skies,
She in her soft supernal loveliness,
  He in his majesty of might and mien,
    Watch over it through Time's eternities.

THE SONNET

Severely fashioned should the sonnet be,
  In utterance imperially clear;
  Its cadences should captivate the ear,
As to the beach the billows voice the sea.
Its major movement, flowing full and free,
  Should make its own majestic atmosphere;
  Its minor, like the rounding of a tear,
Should crystallize the thought's eternity.

Dost think to carve this jewel without toil?
  Ah no! by reverent labor it is wrought—
    The brain that builds it should be quick and keen.
It is a diamond fixed within a coil
  Of finest gold; it is an opal fraught
    With shifting, fiery, iridescent sheen.

BYRON

Song's passionate son, he sails the purple seas
In winged Apollo's lyre-enchanted bark—
Sweeping the waves as lightly as the lark
Mounts to the mid-air in sweet-throated ease—
The one Childe Harold of two centuries!
Pursuing Love's elusive rosy spark,
Or striving to attain Joy's restful mark,
Which at his flushed approach, mirage-like flees.

Saddened and shunned he visits alien lands,
A worn foiled wanderer through the tents of Time,
While Fame's fair star above him beams and glows;
Till with tired feet and faltering failing hands,
He finds—an exile in a classic clime—
The stately silence of life's last repose.

OCTOBER

Resplendent summer leaves her purple throne,
Her vivid green is changed to flaming gold:
Dim drowsy wreaths of opal haze enfold
The distant hills; the little birds have flown
To sing 'neath softer skies; sublime, alone,
Tossing his head to brave the frost-charged cold,
Stands a tall pine-tree, cone-capped, rugged, bold,—
His wind-swept branches bend with murmuring tone.

The sombre waters in the sun's slant ray
Reflect the dropping acorn's transient gleam;
The sere leaves falling in their aimless way
Hush the low murmur of the pebbly stream;
And the far forests robed in tinted gray
Sleep in the silence of their autumn dream.

CALIFORNIA POPPIES

I

Along the fields they lift their leaves of gold,
And guard the humbler growths with patient care;
They glimmer in the grateful gracious air,
And multiply to masses manifold.
Our eager vision they persuade and hold,
That we their message beautiful may bear
To those in sterner climes who never fare
Beyond the limits of ungentle cold.

O kindly offspring of the genial soil!
O blithe companions of the weeds and grass!
O comrades of the sun and wind and dew!
You grow to fullness with no thought of toil,
Content your charm-unconscious lives to pass
In the first homes your blossom-breathings knew.

II

On the sand-drifted hills that skirt the sea
I find you with no trace of greenness near;
Your petals turn with not a touch of fear
To the wild tumult and the wilder glee.
It seems an irony that you should be
The only life that buds and blossoms here;
But something whispers to my inner ear,
Such is kind Nature's purposeful decree.

The billows hail you with their threatening voice,
The stern winds hold you in their stern embrace
And shake you till you shrink and hug the ground,
The bitter rains to harass you rejoice,
And yet, a smile upon your loyal face,
Your life with brave serenity is crowned.

WRITTEN ON BIRCH BARK

The legend is that once when Orpheus played
  Upon his magic lute, the forest trees
  Were so enamored of the melodies,
They gathered round him charmed and unafraid.
But the prim birch in sober suit arrayed,
  Deeming a finer dress would better please,
  Withdrew, and while she tarried, on the breeze
The lute's last echo vanished from the glade.

Expectant still, she patiently awaits,
  In silver silence through the long dim years,
    Those wonder-waves of harmony again;
But ah! the gods, with their large loves and hates,
  Their joys, their cares, their tumults, and their tears,
    Are gone forever from the paths of men.

FIREFLIES

Ye fitful stars of valley and of field
  That glance and palpitate and glow and pass,
  A flash of flames along the living grass—
Night's tiny torches by the day concealed!
Life pulses in the vivid fire you yield;
  For as you revel a quick splendid mass
  In charming silence o'er the dim morass,
Dusk wingèd shapes are transiently revealed.

It may be Danaë is imprisoned here,
  And Zeus, love-guided, hastes this very hour
    In fall of golden rain to wed with her:
Haply Selene graciously comes near,
  In guise of moonlight-fragments in soft shower,
    To watch Endymion's dreaming eyelids stir.

A VOICE

Upon a lone imperial height I stood
  In some strange world that thrilled to some strange sun;
  Creation, endless, seemed but now begun,
Invoking meditation's loftiest mood.
With omnipresence graciously indued,
  Illimitable vision I had won;
  Round orbs of flame the planets flashed and spun
In circlings of celestial magnitude.

The earth revolved incalculably far—
  And yet 'twas near, its peoples I could see;
I heard the hum, the turbulence, the jar,
  The laughs, the moans, the clamoring, the glee:
Then came a voice, majestic as a star,—
  Time were not were there no eternity!

THE OLD HOME

In the dim silence of the purpling gloam,
  At gleaming dawn or glittering noon of day,
  Or when the stars flash on their golden way,
I seek the old familiar sacred home.
The present is the past. Once more I roam
  My childhood scenes; an ardent youth, I stray;
  In calmer years—life's glow just touched with gray—
I hail the vision of hope's airy dome.

There is a pathos in the shrubs, the trees,
  The very weeds that struggle into leaf,
    The aged trellis where the grape-vines cling.
There is a pathos in the murmuring breeze;
  In the dear house itself there is a grief—
    A majesty of grief in everything.

BALDUR

I

Of all who dwelt within Valhalla's halls
  Baldur was hailed most eminent and fair;
  The sweetness of his presence cheered the air,
As from the heavens the healing night-dew falls.
His virtues freed him from the fears and thralls
  Of lesser gods, and often did he bare
  His generous breast that, scathless, it might dare
The mortal missiles hurled against its walls.

But Höder, blind, from Lok took the sole spray
  That could the gentle son of Odin wound,
    And, witless, cast it. Baldur breathes no more!
To Hela's realm he wends his pallid way,
  Vexed by the sad incessant shuddering sound
    Of life's spent waves along death's chill mute shore.

II

But some aver that when the heavens are new
  And earth is disencumbered from its sin,
  His penance over, Odin's son shall win
His bright way back and scenes familiar view;
Shall walk the meadows, glad with dawn and dew,
  Sloping to shores where splendid seas roll in,
  And, reunited with his lovely kin,
Shall all the ancient rugged rites eschew.

Then will Valhalla's hall again rejoice
  With shouts that echo to its golden roof,
    "Let Odin's son forever reign and live!"
Loudest in joy rings Höder's quick clear voice,
  While to Lok, standing penitent aloof,
    Baldur calls softly: "Brother, I forgive!"

DEANE'S GROVE

I went for acorns one October day
Into a grove—Deane's Grove we called it then.
It was my time of happy childhood when
All sounds were welcome and all sights were gay.
With the kind patient trees I had my way,
My eager way. Good trees, unlike to men,
Each journeying year you gave to me again,
And seemed to join me in my rugged play.

Now I am old I seek the grove once more,
To find the trees that were my joy are few—
And they, alack, are old as well as I!
Some limbs are barren that were green before,—
But as each year their tops their life renew,
The fruit they bear is nearer to the sky.

MERRILL FARM

O gentle spot! O pensive quiet scene!
Where once a child in eager vivid play
The mother gone gave gladness to the day,
From thee what treasured memories I glean!
O peaceful lake, thy pleasant shores between,
Where shadow-pictures in the water stay,
And gleam and ripple move and meet alway,
To welcome thee what vanished lives have been!

Where goes the friend who journeys with me here,
And, journey-weary, stops—and says: "Good bye!
For me to leave you for a while is best!
The far to you to me may be the near.
You shall stop sometime—and shall dimly sigh:
'I am so tired I feel that I would rest!' "

ROSSETTI

A strange life and a dreamful life he led,—
  Strange in its methods, dreamful in its moods;
  He seeks occult and visionary woods,
By vague elusive things inhabited;
His Orphic soul, imagination-sped,
  Betakes itself to voiceful solitudes,
  Where emulous love imperially broods,
Fond, ardor-flushed, superb, and passion-fed.

Song-sound uniquely volumed he obtains
  From sources alien to his native speech;
Masterful quivering cadences he gains,
  Like thrill and throb of billows on the beach;
The splendor of his rhythmic sweep remains
  Within and yet beyond our dazzled reach.

POE

He is the poet of the weird and drear:
  For things uncanny he awakes and calls;
  He sits with midnight in deserted halls,
Amid the hush and imminence of fear;
He walks where foul shapes hover hugely near,
  Where death's chill step his shuddering soul appalls;
  He sees in caves, round hollow waterfalls,
Slim serpents their hot hissing crests uprear.

In visions vague, disconsolate, and grim,
  He roams lone lands where wailing winds blow shrill,
    And the gaunt ghost of desolation dwells;
With ebon croak the Raven comes to him;
  Then, music-tranced, he hears the throb, the thrill,
    The revel and the rapture of the Bells.

MILTON

Visioned, I saw majestic Milton stand
  Upon a towering height; his broad, full brow
  Imperial shone; his eyes, sight-splendid now,
Gazed with strange pity on the teeming land.
With one stern finger of his fine strong hand
  He points in scorn to Englishmen who bow
  To England's Church, and in base homage vow
To yield her to the sway of Rome's command.

Against the shore the inexorable sea
  Thunders its billows of disdainful sound.
"England, your awful ocean makes you free—
  If you but will!" he cries: "O sacred ground,
Resist the pressure of the cringing knee,
  And spurn the Cardinal, scarlet-capped and
    gowned!"

THE SINGER

The happy singer sings from sheer delight:
  He heeds not what the prating people say;
  And though the clever critic seek to slay,
His song soars scathless in aërial flight.
When winter wails through naked woods and white,
  He breathes the living perfume of the May:
  He makes the clouds the comrades of his day,
The stars the glad companions of his night.

He notes a sentience in common things:
  The blade of grass is trembling with desire;
The flower articulates; the leafage sings;
  The very stone thrills with exultant fire;
The drop of dew a mighty message brings;
  The spurned mute clod is fraught with force and
    ire.

BURNS

O royal Robbie! there is not a king
  In all of Scotland's immemorial line
  So crowned as thou! Nature's unstinted wine
For thee flowed freely! Thou wert born to sing!
Soaring with ease of flight and sweep of wing
  Up to Song's firmamental stars that shine,
  Thou comest nearer to the touch divine
Than mightier bards for whom Fame's pæans ring.

This bit of verse I dedicate to thee
  With diffidence of awe-encumbered pen;
    Not mine thy mastery of ruth and mirth!
Often to Afton's murmuring stream I flee,
  And feel the quick tear start and trickle when
    The ploughshare turns thy Daisy from the earth.

NEXT DOOR

Within is flash and vividness of light,
  Dazzle and witchery and swirl of dance,
  Exultant jest and captivating glance—
Sheer merriment is at its loftiest height.
Without is dimness and inscrutable night;
  The greatening shadows veer, recede, advance,
  The trees are motionless as in a trance—
Time tarries in his ever-onward flight.

Next door the rooms, save one, are void and drear—
  Where the lamp pales, a widow, crazed with grief,
    Clasps her doomed only child against her breast:
With visage stern that chills the atmosphere,
  Death comes with summons pitiless and brief—
    A tremulous gasp—the fluttering pulses rest.

She thought much, and she wrote much, and she
died,
And the vague world was very good to her.
Her fine ear caught the vivid free wing-whir
Of far-off bird. Her wistful gaze descried
Fair hues and shapes to duller sight denied.
Of star and flower she was interpreter.
She loved the clouds, the hills, the brooks, the stir
Of leaf. And the great sea she glorified.

And she is gone from earth, is vanished quite:
No more she weeps with us, and laughs, and
sings:
She lives beyond our shifting day and night,
Beyond our discords and our murmurings,
Within the larger and the fuller light,
Amid the music of immortal things.

THE SILENCE OF THE SNOW

How silently the feathery snowflakes fall
Adown the stillness of the placid air!
They fold the withered leaves with gentle care
And fill the fissures of the gray stone-wall;
Through their soft dusk the snow-bird sends his call
From out the clump of alders brown and bare;
Their touch of tenderness is everywhere—
On lowly shrub, on pine-tree brave and tall.

And now they greet the chance-uplifted eye,
Like delicate petals floating dimly down
From fertile meadows and fair fields above;
But when so lightly each on each they lie,
Earth's barrenness receives a quiet crown
Of perfect whiteness and of perfect love.

TOO LATE

If I could fix within the sonnet's space
  The thought that agitates and frets my brain,
  What ecstasies of triumph should I gain,
Treading song's altitudes with ardent pace:
But just as some inimitable grace
  And wonderment of wedded words obtain,
  I feel the prick and impotence of pain—
My feet have failed me ere they won the race.

And if perchance at any future hour
  The thought should come again and stir my soul,
    And I should capture it and make it sing—
The fascinations of its natal power
  Would never thrill me at the singer's goal,
    For I should miss the music's primal ring.

VENUS VICTRIX

Up from the sea, through the green wave she came;
  Around her swirled the foam in silvery dance.
  She conquered gods and men with one bright glance,
And Jove said: Venus Victrix is her name!
She flashed to far Olympus, swift as flame,
  Where tranced ears leaned to Beauty's utterance,—
  Ah, curious caprice of stress or chance,
To wed with Vulcan, ugly, marred and lame!

But many lovers clasped her after this;
  And chief of all the fierce and fiery Mars,
    Against whose breast she heaved voluptuous sighs.—
Was it because of her celestial kiss,
  To him as lovely as the light of stars,
    That he was placed forever in the skies?

ON THE ROCKS

Far downward from the friendly lighthouse tower
  Slopes a precipitance of jagged rocks,
  Which brave the fury of the breakers' shocks
And fling the surf back in a diamond shower.
From the cliff's beetling edge I shrink and cower
  At the drear awfulness: but see, in flocks
  The sea-gulls yonder! their glad screaming mocks
The baffled yearnings of the wild waves' power.

As these strange birds in perfect safety glide
  Above the dangers of the dread abyss—
So, in faith's fearlessness, may we outride
  Life's perilous whirlpools where the waters hiss.
  The foes we conquer, not the foes we miss,
Do strengthen us to meet the hostile tide.

BEYOND THE SURF

Beyond this ceaseless striving there is rest!
  The smooth, broad billows swing and heave and sway,
  And o'er them hosts of little ripples play,
Curled by the quick light breezes of the west.
A boat sails by in pleasure's idle quest,
  Swift pressing from her prow the crisp white spray,
  Her slender-trailing wake a level way
Of bubbled foam a-dance in gleeful zest.

At the horizon's edge, where distance blends
  The soft low dimnesses of sea and sky,
    Monhegan lifts his dusky, sombre pile.—
Silence—save when the warning fog-horn sends
  Across the waters its far mournful cry,
    Whose tone forbids the listening face to smile.

DAYS

Creative, also uncreative days
We have:—either days emulous and keen,
Bright, stately, prescient, sensitively clean,
Vocal with birds upon the vibrant sprays;—
Or days blank, effortless, dull with dead grays,
In which a few spent, ragged leaves are seen
Upon the withered boughs where life has been,
While bleak winds moan down the mute, barren ways.

Our moods inevitably mix and shift:—
Who sent the mighty thrill to Shakespeare's brain,
Which woke his spirit from unvisioned sleep?
What caused the impermeable cloud to lift
From Milton's eyes? And whence was flashed the strain
To Keats, which made his soul to music leap?

SONGS

All singers do not sing their songs in words:
The brook's low ripple is unwritten rhyme;
The melodies we hear in summer's prime
From leaf-dimmed coverts are the songs of birds;
Unlanguaged music to his listening herds
The shepherd pipes, prone lying 'neath the lime;
The star-march, grandest symphony of time,
In silent splendor walks the sky that girds.

Save those invisible letters on the ground,
The sinless Man who dwelt in Galilee,
Our perfect Poet, wrote nor verse nor line:
The story that He voiced is angel-crowned,
And to earth's ultimate children it will shine
And be their light through kind eternity.

THE TWO LIVES

What think you of the larger life, my friend—
  The life beyond the vague, brief life of earth,
  Into whose homes we have our second birth,
And toward whose mystic shores all mortals tend?
Lightly I answered: "With the ways I wend
  I am content; it were of little worth
  To check with cheerless thoughts my present mirth—
Haply this known life is life's ultimate end."

Later, when day's last western flush retires,
  When dews and dimnesses and dreams delight,
    And naught of dissonance the silence mars—
  Above the regions of inscrutable night
I see the inextinguishable fires
    Of hosts of incommunicable stars.

CORN

I drop a kernel in the quickening ground,
  That from its golden burial may be born
  A sturdy growth of tall and tasseled corn,
Amid whose leaves the precious fruit is found.
To the fixed laws of kindly nature bound,
  It gladdens at the crimson cup of morn,
  Low rustling when the aftermath is shorn
And sickles through the shimmering harvest sound.

True emblem of Columbia's power and pride,
  How universal is thy splendid sway!
Thou wavest by the bold Atlantic's side,
  And where the broad Pacific flings its spray:
Thy constant usefulness the rich divide
  With the dear poor who bless thee every day.

IF THOU WERT HERE

A sense of sorrow greets me everywhere
  Since thou hast gone away. What is't I miss?
  The touch of a soft hand; a fragrant kiss
Laid warmly on my lips; I miss the hair,
Eyes, speech, laugh, smile; the light step on the stair;
  A white soul closely clasping mine through this
  Time-measured, outer garb—love's holiest bliss;
A tender gladness from the very air

I breathe is gone; the stir of the green leaves
  Is a sad, dreary sound; the happy song
    Of yonder bird is mournful to mine ear;
The pebbled brook disconsolately grieves;
  And bright-winged clouds move sombrely along:
    How joyous all would be if thou wert here!

GUIDANCE

Upon the corner of a village street,
  Close to the limits of my homestead lands,
  An unpretentious upright firmly stands,
In workmanship plain, commonplace and neat.
To make its purpose clear, its form complete,
  Below its top, like fingerless still hands,
  A lettered board, transversely placed, commands
To the right path the stranger's doubting feet.

And when the vision widens, and the stars
  Majestically move across the night,
    And God seems near in their eternal glow,—
When no harsh voice the sacred silence mars,
  I see, beyond the structure's slender height,
    The shadow of a Cross upon the snow.

THE ROADSIDE

Along the roadside in September days
The goldenrod in rich abundance grows;
Into the air it fearlessly up-throws
Its mimic steeples of soft billowy sprays;
It seems a silent sea of saffron haze—
And here and there a radiant lily glows
Amid its gold, whose scarlet life outflows
In slender tongues of quivering, harmless blaze.

Fair yellow and brave red together dwell
Contentedly in autumn's tuneful air,
And shrink not till the pitiless frosts are come;
Perchance some dryad's merry magic spell
Caused these glad blossoms their gay hues to wear,
And sweetly smile while crickets chirp and hum.

WHEN LOVE IS NEAR

When Love is near, though of him unafraid,
Ofttimes the power of speech forsakes my tongue,
Like to a voiceful bell, once lightly rung,
Which now by some impediment is stayed;
And yet the words, from utterance delayed,
When Love is gone, are fluently outflung;
In stress of fervent feeling, said or sung,
I call to him in accents passion-made.

Haply he heeds me and trips blithely back,
Haply he heeds me not and ne'er returns.
Ah, pained and saddened am I at the lack
Of light when Love's lamp neither cheers nor burns;
For if he come not, all is bare and black—
But if he come, the flame-warmth upward yearns.

INTERWINDING STREAMS

Ah, life hath naught more beautiful to show
  Than thou, sweet, gracious lady of my dreams!
  A tender light from thy pure presence beams·
As from dawn's crimson over stainless snow:
In twilight calm thy excellences glow
  And lull to restfulness; thy motion seems
  Free as the flow of interwinding streams
That through the meadows and the woodlands go.

The petals of the frail anemone
  Open not to the day's rare loveliness
    Till softly startled by the warm wind's breath—
So my heart's leaves were closed till touched by thee!
  And when I feel thy lingering caress
    My wakened love to thy love answereth.

IN FRUGAL MINORS

In frugal minors I am forced to sing,
  My brain with lyric melody is fraught;
  From its chipped shell I free some slender thought
To let it soar on unambitious wing.
I voice the bubbles that the brooklets fling,
  The sunlight by the fluttered leafage caught,
  The blossom to immaculate beauty wrought,
The vision of a cloud's far vanishing.

A flush, a frown upon my lady's face,
  And fires of fancy in my spirit start;
About her throat a witchery of lace,
  And rhythmic raptures through my bosom dart;
The marvel of her motion's vivid grace
  Wakens to music my impassioned heart.

WHEN FANCY'S FINGERS

When fancy's fingers softly turn the key
  Upon the noises of the outer air,
  Backward through memory's corridors I fare
And sit once more with summer and with thee.
The same large womanhood appeals to me,
  Patrician from light foot to splendid hair;
  And the same smile the dear face used to wear
Plays round the lips from petty passions free.

Thy voice, so marvellously sweet and clear,
  Is music felt and folded in the soul,
    Like the low ripple of some ceaseless song.
The beauties of thine inner self appear
  When from thine eyes love's purities outroll
    And whisper of a life that knows no wrong.

THE EARTH-TOUCH

Above the grosser air the ether is;
  And when the gods upon Olympus dwelt,
  Their splendid life its quickening ardors felt,
And thrilled and greatened in its rarer bliss.
And yet (how fain we are to flout at this!)
  The gods with earth-folk supped, convened, and
      dealt—
  To mortal maidens amorously knelt
For warm caress and passion-quivered kiss.

One signal truth both gods and men aver:
  Life's perishable forms are dearer far
    Than those immutable and permanent.
The ocean charms with its inconstant stir,
  The flower is fairer, sweeter than the star,
    The forest friendlier than the firmament.

THE THREE IMMORTALS

A land of silence in the sunset's glow,
  Low-traversed by an ever-murmuring stream,
  Whose moving waters tremulously gleam
And tarry lingeringly where slim reeds grow.
A spacious marble palace white as snow,
  With towers and tapering pinnacles that seem
  The lofty actuals of some splendid dream,
Some dwelling of the gods of long ago.

In the dim porch the three immortals stand:
  Hypnos, warm-limbed, with drowsy poppied eyes,
    Caressing winged Oneiros' dusky hair;
Behind them looms, with cruel beckoning hand,
    Stern Thanatos, majestically fair,
  Unchanging through the changeful centuries.

CONDITIONS

What need to fret about the day to be?
  Enough for us to know the day that is:
  Each moment brings its brief realities—
To their conditions all must bend the knee.
You walk the street, but ere you reach yon tree
  Ten level rods away—some sudden whiz
  May daze your brain, and query, laugh or quiz
Will nevermore quick stir your lips for me.

And I shall live for you a few strange days,
  And weep sad tears, and often seek your grave
    To put flowers there to wither, fade and pass:
But skies have brighter hues than sombre grays,
  The seas grow calm when tempests cease to rave,
    And sunshine follows shadow on the grass.

CHRIST BEFORE PILATE

I

Christ before Pilate! Cruel, sacred scene!
With head close-cropped and weak, repellent face,
The ruler sits within the judgment-place;
Before him stands the Master, meek of mien,
With look benign and countenance serene—
A Presence of incomparable grace,
Patiently waiting in the narrowed space
Toward which the hungry rabble surge and lean.

With visage of commingled hate and fear—
His jaws agape, his wicked hands up-thrown—
A creature of the mob yells: "Let Him die!"
While through an opening in the hall's dusk rear,
Over a scrap of summer, zephyr-blown,
Broods an infinitude of tranquil sky.

II

When first I saw the picture, I but saw
The stir and stillness of the mighty scene,
The wondrous coloring, the shade, the sheen,
And Pilate parleying with the Jewish law;
The blatant rabble's murder-craving maw,
And the hushed gaze of Pity's dusky queen;
The distant window with its glimpse of green,
The near calm Figure, without fleck or flaw.

But now, to tranced imagination's eye,
The visions from the canvas pass and fade,
Save two, which softly, vividly increase:
The scrap of summer with its arch of sky,
And the dear Christ, in majesty arrayed—
A Presence of triumphant love and peace.

IF WE BE ALONE

There is no drearier place upon the earth
  Than the great city if we be alone,
  If no voice of rememberable tone
Amid the moving multitude have birth.
We drift about in aimlessness and dearth,
  Like the dropped leaf hither and thither blown;
  The heart for sweet companionship makes moan
And saddens at the sound of alien mirth.

But with the forest's winding, shadowed ways,
  Though unfamiliar, if the birds be there
  And through the vocal glades the light winds fare,
While the brook chatters as it purls and plays,
  A sense of kindly comradeship we share
Amid the dimnesses of greens and grays.

TWO FRIENDS

Two friends are gone, two precious poet-friends,
  Who walked the dear old city's honored ways:
  One with his wealth of keen convincing phrase,
One ripe with wit and all wit's pathos lends.
Each, following thought's tumultuous turns and trends,
  Fulfilled the splendid mission of his days;
  In virile verse, amid life's gleams and grays,
Each wrought a treasure that sure fame defends.

Holmes, Lowell—names we love to hear and speak,
  Caress and iterate, till they become
    A ceaseless lofty echo in the heart!
For their great words and greater thoughts we seek,
  Unmindful of the multitudinous hum
    And callous clamor of the surging mart.

BAYARD TAYLOR

Where, traveller, have thy restless footsteps gone?
  What swift inscrutable summons bade thee go
  So silently, nor let thy near friends know
Thy mission's purpose? Art thou toiling on
Beneath chill skies in regions bleak and wan
  With desolations of eternal snow?
  Or dost thou journey where the tropics strow
Rare blooms, and summer suns have ever shone?

Or in some splendid dream didst thou behold
  The glimmering borders of the spirit land,
Making earth's brightest visions bare and cold?
  Did God's majestic voice thy soul command
To burst the bonds of elemental mould,
  And in a larger life and manhood stand?

POPE

Bedizened, rouged, this pompous little man,
  In lines that glitter still, charmed England's ear;
  Him even lords and ladies held in fear
Or praised when called his polished verse to scan.
If a new thought to fret his brain began
  At midnight's quiet hour, when sleep was dear
  To those that served, he roused them—duty queer!—
To furbelow him for a fevered span.

Patrons he sought among the rich and great,
  Then lashed their foes with artificial ire.
His wit was apt; his words had wondrous weight
  With queens and kings; yet to no pure desire
Or noble purpose was he consecrate:
  Fine phrasing his without the poet's fire.

FLOTSAM

Tossed by the billows on the pebbled strand
  Are bits of board and other wooden things,
  Such fragments as the sailor often flings
On the far waters with unthinking hand;
And as, obeying some supreme command,
  The gull flies nestward with unerring wings,
  So, after weary wave-washed wanderings,
The dull wood, as by instinct, finds the land.

So may the poet's little chips of verse,
  Cast careless on opinion's fickle seas,
Survive the critic's billow-lashing curse,
  The storm-gusts of fierce envy's enmities,
And safe on fame's palm-waving shores rehearse
  To listening ears love's lingering melodies.

JETSAM

Below the surges that upheave and sway,
  Strewn on the ocean's mute unfathomed floor,
  Are placid treasures shut for evermore
From gleam of stars and glare and glow of day.
They reck not of the curled waves' jocund play,
  Of boom of billows on the barren shore,
  Or scream of gull that skims the surf to soar
Above the tumult of the torn, tossed spray.

But when the seas are still and skies are fair,
  Haply anear some treacherous bar or reef,
The diver will these watery dangers dare,
  And after search delayed, perchance, or brief,
Will find a tangle of trailed dripping hair,
  The sole survival of some mighty grief.

O WINTER NIGHT

The moon is up, and on the patient snow
  Pours a soft gleam of quiet golden light;
  And to the clumps of fir, half-clad in white,
The moonbeams in hushed yearnings love to go
To seek the shadow in the nooks below.
  No cloud is seen; no bird in happy flight;
  Only the tender glimmer of the night,
With wealth of starry points that flash and glow.

O Winter Night so beautiful and still,
  So soon to leave us in the sun's quick ray!
O snowy garment robing dale and hill,
  So soon to vanish in the warmer day!
Thy influences guard the germs that fill
  With flowers and fragrance the sweet lap of May.

LONGFELLOW

(For a Picture)

Poet, a shining aureole crowns thy days!
  Thy regal summer's purple pomp is past,
  And autumn's burning glories o'er thee cast
Their mellow crimsons pencilled with soft grays.
As, canopied with wreaths of pearly haze,
  The sun-clad mountain, distance-dimmed and vast,
  In living grandeur shall forever last,
So through the years to be thy work shall blaze.

A privacy of labor wins thee fame:
  Inglorious ostentation's petty pride
Blurs not one letter of thy rounded name;
  Thy lucid forehead, generously wide,
Bespeaks the might of Honor's gracious flame,
  By purity of soul intensified.

LILIES OF THE VALLEY

When spring is generous with song and sun,
  And apple-blossoms falling snow the ground;
  When brooks delight to babble, flash and bound,
And rapid ripples with the grasses run;
Amid thick leaves the lily-cups are spun
  In looms invisible, devoid of sound;
  The airy shuttles ply their magic round
Until the marvels are divinely done.

As twilight's golden purples fringe the west,
  And fraught with fantasy we dimly hear
    A merry chiming as of elfin bells,
From pealing petals rhythmically pressed,
  A delicate fragrance fills the atmosphere
    And of the dew's celestial mission tells.

THE SONNET

As, poised on slender stem, some perfect rose
  Unfolds its delicate petals to the air,
  Till lo! a little rounded life is there,
Amid the sweetness that its breath bestows;
Even thus, within the sonnet's classic close,
  Beyond whose limits it may never fare,
  The thought should shape itself until it wear
A rhythmic garb of tumult or repose.

A sonnet is a lover's laughing song;
  A sigh, a symphony, a lyric brief;
    A throb of mighty music from the sea;
It seeks the stars, or brook-like bounds along;
  'Tis now a cry of passion-throated grief,
    And now an epic in epitome.

THE COVE

An inlet of the sea with wooded shores.
  Some cottages whose painted roofs are seen
  Among the many shades of living green.
A sky from which a softened sunlight pours—
Fragments of cloud about the sky in scores.
  A narrow wake where a small craft has been.
  Breaths from an ocean that with salt is keen.
A distant sound of measured, dipping oars.

An island yonder with a long low point
  Of smooth brown rock, and a gull sitting there
    Watching the waves that wander restfully:
Just back a pine that seems as out of joint
  It were. A hawk that seeks the higher air.
    The lone sad voice of a complaining sea.

IF THOUGHTS WERE WORDS

If thoughts were words, and I could make them sing,
  How all my days were filled with melody!
  But song must native and impassioned be,
And its own life-triumphant message bring.
The wood-lark's note is loftier for the wing
  That bears him skyward in ecstatic glee,
  And mightier is the music of the sea
When ragged, whitening billows plunge and swing.

It is the gift of song that gives renown.
  The thoughts that urge are often scant and few;
Some seeming dullard or some shiftless clown
  May flash a lyric from a drop of dew;
Some graceless wight may wear the poet's crown
  For singing of the love he never knew.

LIFE

A little longer and the toil is done,
  A little farther on the road to go,
  A little stress of shifting, drifting snow,
A little journeying through shade and sun,
A little rest where quiet waters run,
  A little parleying with friend and foe,
  A little oasis where blossoms grow,
A little darkness ere the light is won.

A little sin that leaves a little stain,
  A little sorrow and a little joy,
  A little mending of a broken toy,
A little pleasure and a little pain,
  A little thought of when I was a boy,
A little fear that I have lived in vain.

ITS VANISHED·SUMMER

I found a rose beside my path one day,
  It faced the autumn with a pleading fear;
  Its leaves were cold, and some of them were sere,
With edges withered to a flaccid gray.
In the pale glimmer of the sun's thin ray
  It got a semblance of pathetic cheer,
  But shuddered when the barren wind was near,
And for its vanished summer seemed to pray.

I stooped to pick the flower; but, musing, said:
  If I should take you from your patient stem,
Your mournful beauty would be sooner dead
  Than if I left you where the stern frosts hem
  Your pathos round, and you do shrink from them
Till the last quiver of your life is fled.

MAYFLOWERS

Now March with gusty turbulence and glee
  Blows weary winter from the softened air,
  And earth and sky the tender touches share
Of April's gently tearful sympathy.
The robin whistles from the budding tree
  A welcome to the cheer that thrills him there;
  And, ice-released, the bright brooks jocund fare
Over the polished pebbles babblingly.

Later, on ragged hillocks in the field,
  From 'neath the dank decay, once living green,
    Some faint flushed petals shyly peep and peer,
Whose vivid lips, by whiffs of warmth unsealed,
  Sweet whisper through their trailed leaves' tangled
    screen:
      "The Spring, the Spring, the merry Spring is
      here!"

TO-DAY

No day has been, no day will ever be
  In all its many features like to-day:—
  The clouds that slowly through the thin air stray,
Once lost to sight we never more shall see;
The gentle wind that blows so restfully
  Will ne'er return to toss the leafy spray,
  Nor waft again the wild bird's merry lay
From out the shadow of the forest tree.

Thus Nature's changes to her children show
  Some fragments of creation's endless scheme
    And the grand harmony which through it runs:
Earth's transitory phases come and go,
  Parts of one perfect whole, lit by the gleam
    Of vast, unnumbered, planet-circled suns.

REALMS AËRIAL

Thy voice comes to me, lady, in the night,
  As sweet as music o'er the waveless sea,
  As clear as church bells pealing distantly,
As pure as dawn's first dewy, rosy light.
Thy golden presence makes the darkness bright,
  The place is exquisitely filled with thee;
  No leaf is stirring on the drowsy tree,
No bird is heard in startled sudden flight.

And in my poppied semi-sleep I feel
  Myself Endymion, Zeus-favored boy,
    And thee Selene, goddess chastely fair.
Ah, happy I, that thou shouldst softly steal
  From realms aërial in hushed, timid joy
    To watch and guard me with thy pitying care!

THY HAND RESTS LIGHTLY, LADY

Thy hand rests lightly, lady, on my face,
  As soft as dew that cheers the weary flower,
  As gentle as the fall of summer shower,
As warm as sunshine in a sheltered place;
Its touch is exquisite in tender grace,
  Its pressure is a sweetly thrilling power
  In which I miss the tick of Time's dull hour
And live in soul beyond the bounds of space.

As Eos, goddess, kindly draws aside
  Night's veil to let her royal brother pass
    And drive the day across the happy skies,
So my heart's veil thy presence opens wide
  That Love may rise, like fragrance from the grass,
    And move above the life it glorifies.

WHEN THE NIGHTS COME

How pallid are the brief November days!
  The sunbeams flicker pale, and scant, and chill;
  The far, perpetual prattle of the rill
A wistful iterance to the ear conveys:
No wood-birds pipe their dissyllabic lays,
  The expectant air is tenuous and still;
  Field, meadow, forest, upland, valley, hill,
Present a barrenness of browns and grays.

When the nights come the heavens are brave and clear;
  An azure green prevails about the west,
    Dappled with tints of evanescent rose—
  And Mercury's fire is dimly manifest,
And Venus shines imperial and near,
    And Jupiter majestically glows.

AT ELEUSIS

As Phryne, at Eleusis, laid aside
  Her garments, and let fall her sweet, warm hair,
  Before the populace mutely gathered there—
Then sought, waist-deep, the cool sea's foam-flecked tide,
That stern Poseidon might be satisfied,
  And great Apelles greater honors wear,
  And Aphrodite live, supremely fair,
The poet's ecstasy—the painter's pride—

So, should I put this mortal garb away,
  And stand, heaven-viewed, in Love's resplendent sea,
    Wouldst thou on memory's canvas fix my soul?
For that which thou didst love in earth's brief day—
  Form, features and glad life, shall wait for thee
    Where time's tossed billows neither strive nor roll.

BROWNING

Least comprehended of the later bards,
  Most shunned, most praised, most scorned, most deified,
  To Shakespeare in imperial thought allied,
And like to Landor for whom fame retards,—
From the dim pallidness of drooping chards
  To yonder oak against the dawn descried,
  His loving search no living thing denied:
Man's deeper nature claimed his grave regards.

No stern recluse, he passed his songful days
  Faith-loyal to Mirth's luminous decree;
He walked great London's multitudinous ways
  With agile step, with bearing genial, free;
Once only yearning to Death's awful gaze
  Below the skies that arch the classic sea.

MRS. BROWNING

In Dante's home her mortal summons came,
  Near the hushed Arno, river of rest and song,
  Beneath the skies where flash and quiver and throng
The eternal stars that guard great Dante's fame.
Did her flesh-weak but spirit-ardent frame
  Still yearn to right oppression's cruel wrong?
  Did she for earth-life or for soul-life long?
The thoughts that chance with death we may not name.

Haply her eyes, which looked their wondering last
  On the loved poet-partner of her prime,
Shone with the preciousness of memories past
  And visionings melodious and sublime,
Then with one prescient gaze ecstatic, vast,
  Forever closed upon the scenes of Time.

SWINBURNE

This singer sings an eagle-soaring song,
A mighty music yearns within his brain,
He voices passion's fierce and splendid pain,
His utterance, as the sea's, is sweet and strong.
The cloud-accustomed hills he sweeps along,
He thrills the rivers as they thread the plain,
The gods he wakes to ancient life again,
He strives to crush oppression's cruel wrong.

England, reject him not! He is your pride,
The offspring of your songward years of toil,
Your chiefest bard howe'er you may deride;
The boldest singer he that treads your soil,
Swayed by your ocean's uncontaminate tide
And quickened by your errors' stern recoil.

CRABBE

He knew the Borough's every turn and twist—
The church, the shop, the tavern, and the school,
The lads, the lasses, the contented fool,
The ragged beggars roving where they list.
His searching eye no sight of sorrow missed—
The prone inebriate with his nauseous drool,
The ugly beldam on her crippled stool,
The wistful hunchback by his sister kissed.

He had a pleasant word for each and all,
Their lot he strove to mitigate and cheer:
He sought the sick; he answered to the call
Of those in poverty when death was near;
He helped the sinners who were like to fall,
And made their duties beautiful and clear.

A WATER-LILY

I twirl a lovely lily in my hand
With yellow trembles round its beaded heart—
Its softly tinted petals touched apart,
It may be at some Naiad's hushed command.
On the lake's level it was kissed and fanned
By breeze and ripple; quivered by the dart
Of agile pike that takes his sudden start
To seize the lure by artful angler planned.

Were it not kinder to have left you there,
Restfully floating near your ample leaf,
Stem-anchored to the sheltered lakelet's bed?
You thrive not, lily, in this alien air;
Your beauty droops and fades in silent grief
That never can be healed or comforted.

THE WORLD IS WHITE

The world is white with winter and with snow;
The sleighbells chime and merrily go by,
Late autumn has forgot to wail and sigh,
The sudden frost-flames glitter to and fro.
Few leaves are left for wanton winds to blow,
The trees are silhouettes against the sky,
The summer birds have ceased to sing and fly,
The keen brooks bicker not in rippled flow.

The maple branches, yearningly outspread,
Seem fountain-jets quick frozen in mid-air;
Before the twilight's fading fires are fled,
The heavens their bright eternal jewels wear;
And Luna comes, with lovely, queenly tread,
To lay the fullness of her beauty bare.

LANDOR

August he gazes on the southern sea—
  An ancient man, superb and leonine:
  The unquiet waters scintillate and shine—
The white sails gleam—the light winds wander
      free.
Like some storm-vexed and age-defying tree,
  In whose gnarled life decay and strength combine,
  He resolute stands; about his temples twine
The few thin hairs that mock his fled youth's glee.

Landor, self-exiled from thy natal shore,
  A lone sublimity exalts thy state!
As the stern billows, luminous and frore,
  Unceasing roll with voice reverberate,
Thy crescent fame shall sound for evermore
  Above the ills and ironies of fate.

INDIAN SUMMER

There comes a day when autumn suns are brief—
  A little, perfect day when winds are still;
  Soft gleams of golden light the warm air fill,
And fire the crimson of the maple's leaf.
The robin's clear, full note, unfraught with grief,
  Blends with the sparrow's finer, slenderer trill;
  And o'er the summit of the far-seen hill
Float clouds, rose-tinted, like the coral-reef.

The brooklet ripples o'er its pebbled bed,
  And tosses damps upon the sedgy shore;
The oak, with foliage of dark-burnished red,
  Stands bold, frost-rifled of its fruited store;
And over all the halcyon skies are spread—
  The semblance of the skies that summer wore.

TENNYSON

The singer of the perfect song is gone:
  Has stepped beyond the limits of our sight;
  Beyond the changefulness of day and night;
Beyond where brows are wrinkled, cheeks are wan.
Amid supernal scenes he journeys on,
  'Neath fadeless skies of iridescent light
  Flashed with effulgences divinely bright
From suns unsetting which have ever shone.

In song superb, ethereal, unique,
  He leaves a place majestic and unfilled:
His words a witchery of music speak,
  With their sweet grace the heart is lulled and thrilled:
Though throbs of other splendid song we seek,
  This singer's mighty peals are never stilled.

IN THE BOSTON ATHENÆUM

How sweet to linger in a place like this,
  Relieved of life's monotony and strain;
  Amid an atmosphere of books and brain
The hurrying city's ceaseless din to miss!
Happy within Thought's charming chrysalis,
  We glimpse Imagination's pageant train;
  Dwelling awhile in Italy we gain
The fervor and the thrill of classic bliss.

Around is ranged the wondrous world of books:
  Quaint iron stairways, spiral and antique,
    Conduct to tomes unreachable below.
And as the eye through yonder window looks,
  The outer air is busy with a freak
    And flurry of inviolable snow.

A SNOWLESS WINTER

A snowless winter we look out upon:
  The trees are bare, and seemingly are dead,
  The bleak roads are not keen for sleigh or sled,
The clouds that dim the sky are vague and wan.
In nooks and angles where the sun has shone
  A chill damp tells that warmth is not all fled;
  The anxious workman is dispirited,
Feeling his hope for sustenance is gone.

The river's ice in places is so thin
  'Twill hardly bear the weight of beast or man.
What shall they do who have their bread to win
  Waiting for work without the power to plan?
O serviceable flakes, to fall begin,
  And cheer the barrenness we dread to scan!

BY HUSHED DEGREES

True art consists not of facsimiles;
  It lies not in mere niceness of detail.
  The man to paint the perfect flower will fail
If he but reproduce the flower he sees
With the material eye. By hushed degrees
  A loftiness of vision lifts the veil
  From the supreme ideal that it may sail
Freely among the mind's sublimities.

From out the canvas looks a striking face,
  A likeness clever as to parts and whole;
The trend of finest line and curve we trace,
  We note the tender glimmer of the hair;
  Yet mark we most the spirit-touches rare
That show the presence of the living soul.

RECOMPENSE

I

Apart from life's monotony and toil,
We have our higher selves to satisfy;
One pores upon the stars that gem the sky,
And one upon the flowers that gem the soil;
He seeks the city's vastness and turmoil,
And she the spots where birds and brooks go by;
Poesy to some rare souls is sweet and nigh,
Round others painting's vivid raptures coil.

And each one lifts his favorite pursuit
Above the dollar drudgery and grind,
And clings to it, whatever it may be;
Haply upon this joy the lips are mute,
But ah! how often in the face we find
The presence of some wondrous ecstasy!

II

If all the melody my mind has made
In fitful moments of impassioned zeal
Were put upon the page, would it reveal
The excellence for which my spirit prayed?
Would the lost music, lingeringly stayed
Just short of utterance ere the pen could steal
Its magic from the brain, if found, unseal
Faint echoes of the lyre that Orpheus played?

Could I but make one ditty that should live,
In place of many, weak and fugitive—
A thrill of gladness or a lover's lay—
To pass unheeded I should be content,
Happy that one clear joy-gleam had been sent
Into the gloom of one grief-laden day.

BEYOND THE JORDAN

Beyond the Jordan—so the record saith—
The Master tarried when the tidings came.
Did sudden shivers shake his mortal frame,
Or grief one mighty moment choke his breath?
To the dear weeping home he hasteneth,
And Martha's unbelief is put to shame;
The dead man answered, living, to his name,
And Love stood, victor, at the gates of Death!

Ah! Love heeds not the timid tick of time;
No fetters bind him to earth's little hour:
He stays the tempest and he stills the sea:
He reigns unchallenged, graciously sublime,
Supreme in his illimitable power.
He is divine, he is Eternity!

SEA AND LAND

O the foiled iterance of the yearning sea!
Moaning as if his mighty heart would break,
In unrelenting voice of passionate ache:
"Of my fell fetters would that I were free;
I long on yonder scornful land to be,
And there my joy of absolute empire slake;
What ravage and what ruin would I make,
Then utterly drown it in my pitiless glee!"

The stern shore shuddered at these ominous cries:
'Twas evening, and above the horizon's rim
Stepped Luna, lady of loveliness and light!
"Back to thy caves mysterious and dim,
Insatiate sea," she said; "Hush, no replies!
Thou art my vassal by God-given right."

BRYANT

(For a Picture)

Skilful artificer of rhythmic song,
  Thy rounded verse in fervent color plays,
  As snowy cloudlets bathed in golden haze
Flock westward, vermeil-tinged, a burnished throng.
Again thy lay glides tenderly along,
  Tracing the rivulet's ever-gladsome ways;
  Soaring, in final flight, to suns ablaze,
In sweep majestic, meditative, strong.

Command thy pen to build undying lines!
  Inscribe each thought upon the waiting page!
If action sleep, the brain-force droops and pines:
  The great are keenest oft in hoary age.
As o'er thy brow the gradual silver shines,
  We hail thee man of men—prince, poet, sage!

WHITTIER

How sweet the song this gentle singer sings!
  For in glad melody his pure verse flows,
  Like pebbled brook that musically goes
And bubbles from its busy ripples flings.
He carols of the summer's blossomings,
  Of spring's warm breath, of winter's eddying snows,
  Of radiant autumn when the keen wind blows,
Of joyous birds with softly feathered wings.

In voice unshaken, with unwearied zeal,
  He labors for the fettered slave's release,
That torture from the cruel iron heel,
  From thong and blood and baying hound may cease,
That o'er our whole broad gracious land may steal
  The holy hush of freedom, love, and peace.

BALLADES

BALLADE OF A FRIEND

A friend, a quaint and prudent friend,
It is my happy chance to meet,
As on my daily walks I wend,
Through dust and drizzle, cold and heat.
To my salute upon the street
Or in the shop or at the door,
His lips immutably repeat,
I'm fair to middling, nothing more!

Of stature tall, he's prone to bend,
His face is patient and discreet,
A subtile charm his manners lend,
He is composed from head to feet,
His glance is keen, his garb is neat,
His beard is long and thin and hoar.
And is this phrase his one conceit,
I'm fair to middling, nothing more?

He's oft absorbed (I apprehend)
In thoughts of some polemic sheet,
Whose views he labors to defend
Or strives to controvert and beat.
His intellect is clean and sweet,
And quick and lucid to the core.
From his reply there 's no retreat,
I'm fair to middling, nothing more!

Envoy

As pure as gold, as good as wheat,
His answer I do not deplore.
I love to hear, when him I greet,
I'm fair to middling, nothing more!

A BALLADE OF CONTENT

Why prate we of the future spheres
  And wish our present lives away?
Why close our eyes and shut our ears
  To sights and sounds that flash and play?
  The rustle of the startled spray,
Of clouds the pomp and pageantry,
  The note of bird, the glint of May:
This world is good enough for me.

Mayhap we oft are touched with fears,
  Perchance are crippled in the fray,
And now we weep complaining tears,
  Now through the bitter valley stray,
  Haply the hills are bleak and gray,
But much we get of gleam and glee—
  The sun oft yields a jocund ray:
This world is good enough for me.

We hail the glimmer that appears
  To herald the approach of day,
The hush that captivates and cheers
  When stars their charming visits pay,
  The blossoms, virgin, flushed and gay,
The thrill, the throb, the ecstasy,
  The winds that freshen and delay:
This world is good enough for me.

Envoy

O hand-clasps that our troubles stay!
  O words that cause our doubts to flee!
And shall we ask for more, I pray?
  This world is good enough for me.

THE SONG THAT I SHALL NEVER SING

When twilight's purples pass to gray
  And stars emerge in majesty,
When Night's dim fingers close the day
  And all is hush and ecstasy—
  From the fond homes of Memory,
In immemorial murmuring,
  Supreme, illusive, comes to me
The song that I shall never sing.

The words allure, delude, delay,
  Kiss, captivate, combine, agree,
Flash, quiver, tantalize and play,
  Then soar in matchless harmony:
  I thrill with unconjectured glee
To catch the final faultless ring—
  When sudden fades, and utterly,
The song that I shall never sing.

The voice of bird from budding spray,
  When winter dies by spring's decree—
The flush and perfume of the May,
  Which quickens meadow, field, and tree—
  Vague throbs of far-heard melody,
The perfect poise of perfect wing,
  Are hints of what might chance to be
The song that I shall never sing.

Envoy

Friend, I would give all else for fee,
  If by the forfeit I could bring
To my poor brain the power to free
  The song that I shall never sing.

THE IMMACULATE CHILD

In the manger the sweet Babe lay,
  Under the wintry sky;
The place was barren and gray,
  The inmates were hushed and shy:
  A tremulous, infantile cry
Is uttered by lips undefiled;
  The fond Mother breathes a fond sigh.
Lo, the immaculate Child!

In a wonderful, sudden way,
  Far off, yet dazzlingly nigh,
A light outshining the day
  The innocent shepherds descry:
  Affrighted and awed they would fly
A vision so vivid and wild;
  But list! the clear voice from on high.
Lo, the immaculate Child!

With feet that no obstacles stay,
  With fire of vehement eye,
With tongues that fervently pray,
  The Wise Men their glad journey ply;
  A luminous star they espy,
Like a lamp in the mid-air enisled—
  It leads where their promised hopes lie.
Lo, the immaculate Child!

Envoy

The young Mother's soft lullaby
  Is pure and pleading and mild.
The angels in praising Him vie.
  Lo, the immaculate Child!

A BALLADE OF LOVE

Each creature is none other like,
  We all are variously made;
We cleave the world as does a dike
  That cuts its course through sheen and shade;
  Our very comforts are purveyed;
Sly meannesses we're not above;
  Some push the pen and some the spade:
The only thing that lasts is love.

The ignorantly crafty tike
  For what he does not do is paid;
Often the honest name of Mike
  Is 'gainst the gift of genius weighed.
  I've known a person's prospect swayed
Because he chanced to wear a glove.
  In life's perplexing masquerade
The only thing that lasts is love.

Some pierce their foes with hatred's pike,
  And then rejoice to see them flayed;
Some reck not where fate's bolt may strike,
  If from themselves the blow be stayed;
  Some care not whom their sins degrade;
The serpent are we and the dove:
  But when the losing card is played,
The only thing that lasts is love.

Envoy

Though settlements be long delayed,
  Some time will come the clasp or shove;
And when self's littlenesses fade,
  The only thing that lasts is love.

THE MAN WHO LISTENS WITH HIS EYES

He walks with me, this comrade true,
  Amid the evening, star-bedight,
Or when the glitter of the dew
  Proclaims the morning to the sight.
  His face is kind, his manner bright,
His bearing is discreetly wise;
  He is (with verity I write)
The man who listens with his eyes.

As each to other closer grew
  There came large moments of delight,
And from the stillnesses we drew
  More solace than from wordy might.
  Ah, heeded not was Time's dull flight,
Subdued were life's perplexing cries,
  When near me breathed, benignant quite,
The man who listens with his eyes.

Majestic is his mental view,
  His ethics dare the noblest height;
Ideal schemes his brain imbue,
  In him the practical is slight.
  He is a comfortable wight,
A creature of succinct replies.
  To share my musings I invite
The man who listens with his eyes!

Envoy

My fealty to him I plight,
  His very weaknesses I prize;
May nothing from me disunite
  The man who listens with his eyes!

BALLADE

O quaint Ballade, I wonder why
  Such toil it is to fashion thee!
By dainty twist and turn I try
  To make the sense and sound agree;
  But rhymes are birds, and often flee
When most we think them in the snare:—
  Return, O wingèd words, to me,
And sweetly sing and fleetly fare!

I watch the stars that walk the sky,
  They tell of bright eternity;
The eerie shadows brush me by,
  I marvel what their trend may be;
  A brief breeze startles yonder tree,
Of lisp of leaf I am aware:—
  Come, cadence crisp and silvery,
And sweetly sing and fleetly fare!

I wander where the waves are nigh,
  And list the voices of the sea;
The vivid plunging billows ply
  The shining shores in foamy glee;
  To win a sudden simile,
I note the white gull cleave the air:—
  O flitting thoughts, be fond and free,
And sweetly sing and fleetly fare!

Envoy

I woo the vast, the weird, the wee;
  More, dear Ballade, I may not dare:—
My farewell take for final fee,
  And sweetly sing and fleetly fare!

A BALLADE OF POETS

Where are the poets of the past
  Whose voices rang divinely true?—
Whose thoughts munificent and vast
  From stars and suns their music drew?—
  To whom the gods a welcome blew,
And lamps from far Parnassus shone? . . .
  None dare the heights to which they flew,
Since Alfred Tennyson is gone.

The freshening gale strained spar and mast,
  The billows great and greater grew;
The vessel forward sped and fast,
  Nor port nor anchorage she knew;
  Naught recked they of the circling view,—
Their only end was to sweep on. . . .
  Vanished are captain, ship, and crew,
Since Alfred Tennyson is gone.

Now lesser men their fortunes cast
  In lesser seas, and zephyrs woo;
Their lutes are thin, they cannot last,—
  We listen but to say adieu.
  The artificial gems they strew
Of specious glitter fade anon. . . .
  Is there no granite left to hew,
Since Alfred Tennyson is gone?

Envoy

Fled are the mighty bards and few;
  The ways of song are barren, wan. . . .
Fled is the perfect manner, too,
  Since Alfred Tennyson is gone.

A BALLADE OF MYSELF

Some sing of mirth and some of pain,
  And some of matters grave and high;
Some sing or pelf or praise to gain,
  And some their yearning powers to try;
  Some pipe like birds that flit and fly,
Some woo a weird and minor tone,
  Some like the eagle seek the sky,—
I sing to please myself alone.

To me the thoughts are fond and fain
  That into words I weave and tie
With rhymes that make some merry strain
  Or some sweet elegiac cry;
  And yet I'm free to testify
That from my intimates I'm prone
  To shield my songs. The reason why?
I sing to please myself alone.

The rustle of the ripened grain,
  The breaths of spring that flutter by,
The patter of the busy rain,
  The summer's flush and pageantry,
  The sounds that through the autumn sigh,
The winds that through the winter moan,
  Persuade my ear, compel my eye,—
I sing to please myself alone.

Envoy

When night is come I love to lie
  And feel the stars my very own;
Then most it is, none other nigh,
  I sing to please myself alone.

WHEN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE WROTE HIS PLAYS

Methinks it was a merry scene,
  This London Town of long ago;
The chaste Elizabeth was queen
  (She caused her cousin's blood to flow);
  The courtier sought his wit to show,
And voiced his artificial lays;
  The Thames was mightier than the Po—
When William Shakespeare wrote his plays.

The lasses were alert, I ween,
  In sparkled gaud and ribboned bow,
To greet the lads upon the green
  And to the fiddle trip the toe;
  Proud dames were wont the dice to throw;
Perchance the plotter got the praise;
  The fawning friend was oft the foe—
When William Shakespeare wrote his plays.

The query of the world has been,
  Was William's manner quick or slow?
His doubtful face, was it serene—
  Or flashed with introspective glow?
  Alack! of him we little know,
And of that little most is haze.
  Did other bards the palm bestow—
When William Shakespeare wrote his plays?

Envoy

Ah, passing old shall England grow
  Ere such great poets walk her ways
As in the stately times, I trow,
  When William Shakespeare wrote his plays!

JEHOVAH IS THE LORD OF ALL

Sing not the gods of long ago
  And blazon their heroic deeds;
The stress of Saturn's overthrow,
  The flash of Phœbus' flaming steeds,
  The shifts of Jove's capricious needs
(He in a golden rain did fall);
  Abjure the ancient rugged creeds—
Jehovah is the Lord of all!

Think not that Mammon can bestow
  The largess that from Love proceeds;
Hope not the generous grain to grow
  If cramped and choked with noxious weeds;
  Each hour the suffering Saviour bleeds
And from the bitter Cross doth call:
  Even now his voice divinely pleads—
Jehovah is the Lord of all!

Ye trees that stand in stately row,
  Ye valleys, rivers, hills and meads,
Ye unpretentious flowers that blow,
  Ye everlasting light that leads—
  O every thing that moves and feeds,
Birds, creatures of the field and stall,
  To you the mighty message speeds—
Jehovah is the Lord of all!

Envoy

O narrow spites! O petty greeds!
  O doubts that menace and appall!
A gracious God restrains and heeds—
  Jehovah is the Lord of all!

WHEN PHŒBUS TURNED THE WHITE CROW BLACK

The world exultant must have been
  In those superb and primal days
When gods and goddesses were seen
  To walk its newly blossomed ways;
  Of pomp and puissance and blaze
There was nor lull nor pause nor lack;
  More fulgent were Selene's rays
When Phœbus turned the white crow black.

Methinks a deeper, fuller green
  Darkened the drooped and pliant sprays;
That fairer songsters perched to preen,
  And fluted more melodious lays;
  That quicker crimsons, pearls and grays
Followed flushed Eos' quivering track;
  That woods were blithe with fauns and fays
When Phœbus turned the white crow black.

Life haply was more stern and keen,
  And more heroic were its plays;
More rugged were its rites, I ween—
  Its zests more ardent and its frays;
  All was one merry, mighty maze,
Which of intrigue and plot did smack;
  Mortals oft won the arduous bays
When Phœbus turned the white crow black.

Envoy

But the same torture then did craze
  From love that shifts and doubts that rack
And grief that rends and hate that slays,
  When Phœbus turned the white crow black.

A BALLADE OF AFTER YEARS

How oft obtrudes the sombre thought,
  In moments of supreme delight,
Of Youth's unprosperous battles fought
  And Time's irrevocable blight,
  Of loss of vehemence and might
When withered, waning age appears:
  And shall we stare in speechless plight
When we shall meet in after years?

The revel we have blithely sought,
  The merry music thrills the night,
To fullest pitch is joyance wrought,
  The swirling dance allures the sight.
  You at my side, a marvel bright!
Will (cruel sudden touch that sears)
  Your hair be gray and mine be white
When we shall meet in after years?

By hint of sadness to be caught
  In truth I am a surly wight,—
And yet a lesson it hath brought,
  Which let me soberly indite:
  'Twere easier far to fly Faith's kite
When flash of sun dispels Life's fears,
  Than haply 'neath the dun cloud's flight
When we shall meet in after years!

Envoy

Perchance I'll be an anchorite!
  And you—why seal those rosy ears?—
A dowager, oppressive quite,
  When we shall meet in after years!

BALLADE OF A MAN

A complaisant and cheery wight
  Upon my daily walks I meet,
Who is (he grants me to indite)
  The man who never feels the heat.—
  And he subjoins: You may repeat—
Deem not my boast is overbold—
  I am—I scorn to use deceit—
The man who never feels the cold.

The loping gait, the manner light,
  The naïvetè from head to feet,
Announce (with equity I write)
  The man who never feels the heat.—
  The voice, the bearing brave and sweet
(No useless wraps around him fold),
  Proclaim (my statement is discreet)
The man who never feels the cold.

Once ('twas an odd, uncanny sight,
  The summer sun was on the street)
I saw, with reefer buttoned tight,
  The man who never feels the heat.—
  Again, amid the winter sleet,
I passed (O agony untold!)
  With linen visible and neat,
The man who never feels the cold.

Envoy

When grilled, with anguish I do greet
The man who never feels the heat.—
  When chilled, with horror I behold
  The man who never feels the cold.

IF LANCELOT HAD LOVED ELAINE

What perfectness had Arthur had,
  What good had come to Guinevere,
What woes unutterably sad,
  What peril, what disorder sheer,
  What battle to defile and sear,
What hosts of wounded and of slain,
  Had never been whereof we hear,
If Lancelot had loved Elaine!

In unassuming beauty clad,
  With innocence devoid of fear,
Coy, wistful, ardent, chaste and glad,
  In Arthur's realm without a peer,—
  She wandered blithely by the mere,
She carolled in the sun and rain.
  What prosperousness had been, what cheer,
If Lancelot had loved Elaine!

Her purity rebuked the bad;
  She knew her mission, it was clear.
What though her love should drive her mad?
  What though her life was wan and drear?
  To this one man she must be near:
He was her joy, her grief, her bane.
  No blight had been, no barge, no bier,
If Lancelot had loved Elaine!

Envoy

O lily maid, we drop a tear
  When we repeat the hushed refrain,
Whose mournful pathos haunts the ear:
  If Lancelot had loved Elaine!

A BALLADE OF DECAY

You may go to the ends of the earth,
  You may visit the old and the new,
You may go to the places of mirth,
  You may go to the places of rue,
  You may go where the people are few,
You may go where the multitude sway,
  And one thing you'll find to be true—
The quiver and touch of decay.

The mountains of masterful girth,
  The valleys the brooks glitter through,
The cliffs that rise sheer from the firth,
  The lakes that the dawn-lights imbue,
  The seas with their labor to do,
The rivers that sweep on their way,
  Proclaim, as they come to the view—
The quiver and touch of decay.

The jewels of fabulous worth,
  The blossoms of varying hue,
The grasses that gleam at their birth,
  The woods that the glad breezes woo,
  The stars that the night-skies bestrew,
The clouds that encourage the day,
  Strangely hint—and the great sun too—
The quiver and touch of decay.

Envoy

But the Babe that his first breath drew
  In a manger rude, barren, and gray,
Taught the questioning world to eschew
  The quiver and touch of decay.

A BALLADE OF IMMORTALITY

I look upon the teeming world
  And find it good and very fair:
Leaf, bud, and bloom caressed and curled,
  The birds that pipe and preen and pair,
  The clouds that course the upper air,
The brooks that flash and bicker by—
  And is it strange that I declare
I cannot feel that I shall die?

I watch the billows wrenched and hurled
  That from their crests the foam-shreds tear,
Or when to phosphorescence whirled
  The gulls their seething peril dare;
  I glimpse the colors brief and rare
That through the wave's poised glimmer fly—
  And is it strange this thought I share,
I cannot feel that I shall die?

I hail the Dawn, flushed, dewy-pearled,
  With orient face and quivering hair;
The Twilight lulls when Day is furled,
  And dimnesses its quiets wear;
  I welcome Night's compassioned care,
When stilled is every alien cry—
  And is it strange I triumph where
I cannot feel that I shall die?

Envoy

No doubts perplex with crafty snare,
  No hint of what must come is nigh:
Even when on the dead I stare
  I cannot feel that I shall die.

WILL IMMORTALITY BE MINE

I often muse at close of day—
  When stars idealize the sky
And scintillate the gathering gray
  With coruscations keen and shy,
  When stilled is every alien sigh
To peace ecstatic and benign,
  And earth is touched with Deity—
Will immortality be mine?

In vistas dim and far away
  Vague cottage-lights persuade the eye;
The cricket shrills his little lay
  In nooks mysteriously nigh;
  Vast formless shadows pass me by
Whose mission I may not divine:—
  Whence comes the thought, and how, and why,
Will immortality be mine?

Asleep are blade and flower and spray,
  The trees are motionless and high;
The silences around me play,
  The birds forget to sing and fly;
  Forest and field reposeful lie;
All sights and sounds are far and fine:—
  Then comes the thought my faith to try,
Will immortality be mine?

Envoy

I search, I plead, I yearn, I cry,—
  But from the vanished comes no sign:—
My question is my sole reply,
  Will immortality be mine?

A BALLADE OF DIFFERENCE

He writes in prose and I in rhyme,
  His work is labor, mine is play;
He gets the dollar, I the dime,
  He promptly acts and I delay;
  His task is done at close of day,
Mine waits when stars are in the sky;
  And hence it is I'm urged to say,
He's made of sterner stuff than I.

He culls the news from every clime,
  In dreams I live my life away,
He has no heed of dust and grime,
  I shun the world's ungracious fray;
  He gives no thought to leaf or spray,
I seek the brook that bubbles by;
  Judge as you will or as you may,
He's made of sterner stuff than I.

And yet methinks he's tied to time,—
  I wonder does he ever pray!—
Eternity's majestic chime
  Seems not his inner self to sway;
  To him no forms ethereal stray,
He hears no voices far and high;
  From very overplus of clay,
He's made of sterner stuff than I.

Envoy

When evanescent things decay
  And things immutable are nigh,
Will immortality betray
  He's made of sterner stuff than I?

THE MAN WHO WHISTLES WHEN HE GOES

I have a little tale to tell,
  A tale that's appositely true—
We've had enough of asphodel,
  And we have had enough of rue—
'Tis interest-compelling too,
It has the brightness of the rose:—
  Hence I am eager to review
The man who whistles when he goes.

No matter what he has to sell,
  No matter what he has to do,—
If luck be kind, if luck be fell,
  If skies be harsh, if skies be blue,—
  If ecstasies his pathway strew,
If misery his footstep slows,—
  Thoughts cheerily persuasive woo
The man who whistles when he goes.

And if the bitter funeral bell
  Declares a life occultly through,
He hears with sympathy the knell,
  But ponders not death's baffling clew.
  All grave concerns he would eschew,
He lives—and that is all he knows:—
  No questions erudite imbue
The man who whistles when he goes.

Envoy

Each day to him is only new
  With what his daily need bestows:—
He is, with wants benignly few,
  The man who whistles when he goes.

A BALLADE OF SHADOWS

We joy to see a little child
  Close clinging to his mother's breast,
By doubt and peril undefiled,
  Of all known things the loveliest:
  But when his journeying life is dressed
For manhood's brief and hurried show,
  On him this truth will be impressed—
The shadows deepen as we go.

Days have we that are calm and mild,
  Days have we that are keen with zest,
Days have we that are stern and wild,
  Days have we of malign unrest,
  Days have we when we deem it best
To plunge into the river's flow:—
  And hence we feel—though we protest—
The shadows deepen as we go.

Perchance by love's mirage beguiled,
  We make of love a sacred guest,
And though we hear him oft reviled,
  Slaves are we to his least behest;
  And yet—it seems almost a jest—
His very raptures end in woe:—
  And thus we find—though vaguely blest—
The shadows deepen as we go.

Envoy

Now glad, now eager, now distressed—
  We travel swift, we travel slow;
And till we reach life's final west—
  The shadows deepen as we go.

A BALLADE OF KNOWLEDGE

We have authoritative creeds,
  Which notify us what to do:—
How we must regulate our deeds,
  And regulate our conscience too;
  Which way is false, which way is true;
What we must love, what we must fear:—
  But though they bias me and you—
We only know that we are here.

There are who humbly count their beads,
  And by such act for pardon sue;
There are who think to get their needs
  By looking upward to the blue;
  There are—I hope that they are few—
Who vex their lives with moan and tear:—
  But after testing every clue—
We only know that we are here.

The gracious light to-day that leads,
  To-morrow flickers from our view;
The inner voice that calls and pleads,
  We slight, and haply we eschew;
  The joys that in our paths we strew,
The specious fabrics that we rear—
  They fade, or else they end in rue:—
We only know that we are here.

Envoy

And yet the Master said he knew,
  And made his mighty meaning clear:—
But though his words our thoughts imbue—
  We only know that we are here.

A BALLADE OF SILENCE

When the young world rolls to the close of day,
  And the life-sounds lessen in hushed retreat,—
When into the glimmer of dreams we stray,
  To be wakened by Silence is dimly sweet.
  But when youth's ardors have lost their heat,
And seldom a moment is keen or glad,—
  When our once full pulses duller beat,
To be wakened by Silence is dimly sad.

When we pause in the cool of a woodland way,
  And our limbs the lull of the leaf-bed meet,—
When the sheen and the shade with the bright brooks play,
  To be wakened by Silence is dimly sweet.
  But when through the air comes the cry of the sleet,
And the wild winds moan as they were mad,—
  When our hurt hearts bleed from the blows of deceit,
To be wakened by Silence is dimly sad.

When the good sun shines with a jocund ray,
  And the dews are aflash that our fond eyes greet,—
When we drowse 'neath the droop of a soft-blown spray,
  To be wakened by Silence is dimly sweet.
  But when our zests are no longer fleet,
And the trust is gone that we one time had,—
  When our faiths and our hopes have suffered defeat,
To be wakened by Silence is dimly sad.

Envoy

When the things that we love are with warmth replete,
To be wakened by Silence is dimly sweet.
  When the things that we love are in cerements clad,
  To be wakened by Silence is dimly sad.

BALLADE OF A SINGER

I found a song in a faded book,
A song that was sung in the Long Ago:
I feel that the brain of the singer shook
And thrilled to the measure's rhythmic flow;
That his heart caught the heat of the sacred glow,
As he gave his soul to the wistful page
With the joy of a child and the joy of a sage,
Unmindful of life and the sting of its thong,
The voice of its fame, and the gleam of its wage:
But where is the singer who sung the song?

His birth-name, or haply the name that he took
As a foil or a whim, I shall never know:
He strolled, may be, with a shepherd's crook,
Or the halls of a palace he paced, I trow;
Perchance he was chained to a prison of woe;
Was a priest, mayhap, or a prince, or a mage,
Or, a statesman, he stood in the front of his age:
Ah, me! the conjecture 'tis vain to prolong,
For his song is his only heritage:
But where is the singer who sung the song?

In the shadowy glimmering past we look
For the perfect lyre, for the perfect bow:
The singer is dim in a quiet nook,
The archer is bright in the face of the foe:
The song and the arrow each deals a blow;
But the song escapes from its barrèd cage,
While the arrow is held to its brief swift gage:
And what if the singer were right or wrong?—
If he travelled afoot or went in a stage?
But where is the singer who sung the song?

Envoy

And what was the style of his pupilage?—
And what were his dress and his equipage?—
And was he unstable, or shy, or strong?—
Did he heed the laws of his vicinage?
But where is the singer who sung the song?

CHARON

Chant Royal

A desolate wind disturbs the pallid reeds,
  The strange waves heave and fluctuate and sink;
An ominous mist advances and recedes,
  The craft is dim upon the river's brink;
The Boatman, with inscrutable face and stern,
Stands where the last faint fires of sunset burn,—
  In shadowy garments thin and sere arrayed—
  Or paces with bleak step the sterile glade,
Against the vague west's lurid fitful glow.
  Full soon the lessening final light will fade,
For Charon beckons me, and I must go.

On the low shore a long slim lizard feeds,
  And smaller reptile creatures glide and slink:
A snake's foul length emerges from the weeds,
  Then backward draws to some rock's humid chink.
No sound is heard save cry of startled hern
That some far egress labors to discern:
  Even Time is of its blighted self afraid,
  And seeks for strength to stir some outer aid—
Some hand to lift it from its numb mute woe.
  And through such scenes of frigid damps I wade,
For Charon beckons me, and I must go.

Here are forgot the world's imperious creeds,
  Where dead leaves in the ghastly glimmer blink:
Here is no trace of earth's triumphant deeds,
  Fled even is the force to feel or think;
Gone is the power the creeping chill to spurn;
Beneath the rotting trees is rotting fern;
  No child upon this turf has ever played;
  This land knows not the stroke of any spade;

No husbandman comes here to till or sow.
  Yet I do walk these wastes of things decayed,
For Charon beckons me, and I must go.

The pathway in its downward sloping leads
  Through glooms where horrid phantoms crowd
    and shrink;
Through bitter ways where naught my presence
    heeds,
  And where my footfalls cause no slightest clink;
Through noisome sloughs wherefrom I can not turn,
But am compelled their perils all to learn.
  No respite from these dreads can be purveyed:
  O for one little breath from summer strayed!
But till I find the waters dark and slow,
  My only comfort is that I have prayed,
For Charon beckons me, and I must go.

A strange emotion in me wakes and breeds,
  Dear draughts of joys that were I strive to drink;
Memory my struggling spirit youthward speeds,
  And momently is thrilled some treasured link.
To rouse my faith I infinitely yearn:
I crave from ancient sins release to earn,—
  The chance of urging some great good delayed—
  The generous motive, pure and lofty, stayed—
The checked forgiveness to some contrite foe.
  But shall the future by the past be swayed?—
For Charon beckons me, and I must go.

Envoy

The sombre stream is reached, the fee is paid,
The awful ultimate mandates are obeyed,
  I touch the coldness of the flood's dull flow.
Now the veiled shuddering voyage must be made,
  For Charon beckons me, and I must go.

RONDEAUS AND RONDELS

"BLEAK BLOWS THE BLAST!"

"Bleak blows the blast!" So Coleridge wrote:
You know 't is seldom that I quote;
  But from a poet-prince, I feel
  It is magnanimous to steal;
In truth he struck a surly note.
The words are uttered from the throat,
Their sound suggests an overcoat,
  With snow and frost and ice they deal:
    "Bleak blows the blast!"

They neither ripple, flash, nor float,
Nor swirl like wake from rapid boat;
  They make the bounding blood congeal,
  Life's vivid showers they stay and seal;
Yet on their turbulence I dote:
    "Bleak blows the blast!"

IN STARRY WAYS

In starry ways if we could go,
What things we know not we should know!
  What wonders we should meet and see—
  What unimaginable glee,
What unconjecturable woe!
Perchance vast rivers there would flow,
Great seas 'neath splendid suns would glow,
  If awesome pilgrims we should be
    In starry ways.

Should gracious winds divinely blow
For mighty peoples there who grow
  To fuller, nobler height than we,
  To welcome them should we be free?
Should we to earth one thought bestow
    In starry ways?

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THE LIGHTED CROSS

The lighted cross upon the tower
Emerges at the evening hour,
  And gives, until the gleam of day,
  With no monition of delay,
Reposefulness of patient power.
When stern winds blow, when storm-clouds lower,
When falls the cool of summer shower,
  It glows amid the darkling gray,
    The lighted cross.

For them that lurk, for them that cower,
For them that strive in pleasure's bower,
  For them that never think to pray,
  It shines, to point the better way,
A fadeless, golden, perfect flower,
    The lighted Cross.

IN HAMPTON ROADS

In Hampton Roads the monsters met
To settle an outstanding debt.
  The hidden sky was black as ink;
  The very ocean seemed to shrink
From battle's narrowing cruel net.
Time waited not for thought to let
The blameful deed the conscience fret:
  Of life or death men did not think
      In Hampton Roads.

Now all is peaceful-still,—and yet
Here is the seal of horror set;
  For as the waters rise and sink,
  In brutal sternness link by link,
A vision of the shame we get
      In Hampton Roads.

WHEN SHAKESPEARE WROTE

When Shakespeare wrote his mighty plays,
Superb in action, thought and phrase,
  He got but meagre, vague renown
  Beyond the wits of London Town:—
To know the great the world delays.
Obscure he walked the urban ways;
From queen and courtier came the praise,
  The sneer, the cuff, the smile, the frown,
    When Shakespeare wrote.

But in our modern, modish days,
From sheer caprice the critic slays,
  Or seeks to put the poet's crown
  Upon some pompous pedant-clown.
No poetasters wore the bays
    When Shakespeare wrote.

IN HARVEST TIME

In harvest time, with cheeks aglow,
Into the fields the reapers go,
  And, singing some persuasive strain,
  They stand amid the glimmering grain
The billowy golden mass to mow.
The sickles gleam like crusted snow,
Or like the brook's impetuous flow:—
  I wonder if their touch is pain,
        In harvest time.

Children their happy shouts up-throw
From valleys where no breezes blow,
  And, like far surf-sounds from the main,
  The swift blades shear the shimmering plain
Till all the yellowing life is low,
        In harvest time.

IN WINTER NIGHTS

In winter nights, when thoughts are high,
We watch the stars that pace the sky,
  And with the circling planets share
  The joy of their celestial air;
To us, though distant, they are nigh.
We hear, in fancy, Pollux cry,
And faithful Castor deify;
  To look on Jupiter we dare
    In winter nights.

Now Sirius, with burning eye,
And Vega, luminous, we spy;
  Arcturus, Betelgeuse are there;
  Aldebaran is ruddy, fair;
And Mars for Venus breathes a sigh
    In winter nights.

IN WINTER DAYS

In winter days an ermine dress,
As fine as worn by virgin Bess,
  As soft as foam upon the seas,
  Enfolds the valleys, fells and leas,
Screening their withered loveliness.
And yet we're fain to here confess
We much resist the strain, the stress,
  When winds are hushed and waters freeze
    In winter days.

To counteract the cold's excess,
Around the throat the fur we press;
  The flashing frostpoints sting as bees.
  Upon the hills the naked trees
Are mournful, mute, and motionless
    In winter days.

THE RIVER LIGHTS

The river lights emerge and shine
After the garish day's decline:
  Like stemless golden flowers they stand
  Over the shadow-visioned land,
Of home and happiness the sign.
So far even thought may not divine
The strange stars glitter cold and fine:
  But we who walk the earth command
    The river lights.

Along the bridge, a glowing line,
Their cheer and welcome they combine.
  To be of use is to be grand
  If love hold duty well in hand.
May we, our hearts peace-thrilled, enshrine
    The river lights.

IN TUDOR TIMES

In Tudor times, when Bess was queen,
Red-haired and wrinkled, rouged and lean,
  She trifled with her courtiers gay,
  And, plotting precious lives away,
She strove her cruelty to screen.
Such bards as then have never been:
One William Shakespeare walked the scene!
  Ben Jonson held unchallenged sway
    In Tudor times.

And Mary Stuart, in death serene,
I wonder was her conscience clean
  Of Darnley's murder!—who shall say?
  But, be conjecture as it may,
The axe was bloody kept and keen
    In Tudor times.

SOMEHOW, SOMEWHERE

Somehow, somewhere, we often say,
We shall pursue our endless way,
  Beyond the land that takes the seed,
  Beyond the blossom and the weed,
Beyond the night that shuts the day.
We find no moment of delay—
Amid the gleam, amid the gray,
  Our paths inevitably lead
    Somehow, somewhere.

To journey back we vainly pray,
The onward call we must obey—
  And if the conscience-voice we heed,
  And life's good purpose-values read,
It will be joy for us to stay
    Somehow, somewhere.

WHEN MELBA SINGS

When Melba sings the music sways,
It creeps, it quivers, purls and plays,
  It pleads, it palpitates, it trills,
  It sighs, it yearns, it throbs, it thrills;
It laughs in crimsons, grieves in grays.
And now it hastes, and now delays;
And now in minor murmurings strays
  And wanders weirdly where it wills,
    When Melba sings.

It quavers in pathetic ways,
Upon its knees it sinks and prays;
  It ripples as the rippling rills,
  Then soars to song's celestial hills,
And dies in far dissolving haze,
    When Melba sings.

MY FRIEND, THE SNAKE

My friend, the snake, I met to-day—
'Twas in a place with blossoms gay.
  Around the roots of things he crept—
  He is in creeping an adept,
It is his lowly only way.
A nether impulse to obey,
I seized a stick that near me lay,
  And at the blameless creature leapt—
    My friend, the snake.

But something came my hand to stay.
He raised his head, and seemed to say:
  "Before you startled me I slept!"
  And then he looked at me and wept.
O shame, that I should think to slay
    My friend, the snake.

MY FRIEND, THE DOG

My friend, the dog, beside me lies,
And by his loyalty denies
  That comradeship is but a jest—
  A thing as briefly manifest
As color in the twilight skies.
He seems to hear me with his eyes—
And while as if to talk he tries,
  I welcome as an honored guest
    My friend, the dog.

And is it odd if I surmise
That to be good is to be wise?
  If to be good is to be best,
  And is of constancy the test,
I should be craven not to prize
    My friend, the dog.

SOFT FALLS THE SNOW

Soft falls the snow among the trees,
It glints, it eddies, floats, and flees;
  It flutters up, it flutters down,
  Above the busy, jostling town;
Its every motion tells of ease.
And now it has the sound of seas,
By distance dimmed to faint degrees;
  It gives the gray a white mute crown;
    Soft falls the snow.

It feels the breath of lightest breeze;
Love's perfect law its course decrees;
  It heeds nor riches nor renown,
  But comes alike to sage and clown:
In days that thaw, in days that freeze,
    Soft falls the snow.

I SING MY SONG

I sing my song, and what care I
If critics carp and quip and sigh.
  I know I've not the eagle's wing,
  That of the sea I cannot sing,
Nor of the stars that walk the sky.
But of the little birds that fly,
And of the brooks that ripple by
  In softly-ceaseless murmuring,
    I sing my song.

To sing of love I often try,
Its sweet unrest, its wistful cry,
  The flutters that its favors bring.
  On minor bells my notes I ring.
And now I've frankly told you why
    I sing my song.

HE KNOWS IT ALL

He knows it all: and when I meet
This pompous man upon the street,
  At dawn, at noon, at close of day,
  Or 'neath the night occult and gray,
He cuffs me with his coarse conceit.
His dress is negligent but neat,
He's vivified from head to feet,
  His manner is intense and gay:
    He knows it all.

His face is flushed, his tongue is fleet,
His talk is wild and indiscreet,
  His words he never waits to weigh,
  He scoffs at caution's kind delay:
Though absolutely squelched and beat,
    He knows it all.

WHEN WORDSWORTH WALKED

When Wordsworth walked the Cumbrian hills,
Forgetful of his frets and ills,
  And saw the splendid sun arise
  To climb the flushed and orient skies,
His soul was stirred with mighty thrills.
He loved the tinkling tumbling rills,
The dew the hushful night distils;
  The trees and rocks had ears and eyes
    When Wordsworth walked.

To him the song of whippoorwills
Had more of meaning than its trills:
  The mavis greeted him with cries
  Of dissyllabic harmonies.
Winter was welcome with its chills
    When Wordsworth walked.

RONDEL

Goddess born of the sea,
  Flashed from the silvery foam,
Holding of love the key,
  Why are the skies thy home?

Once thou wert fain and free
  Envious earth to roam:
Goddess born of the sea,
  Flashed from the silvery foam.

Forever a friend to be
  Of the purpled deepening gloam,
What of thy primal glee,
  Queen of the starry dome?
Goddess born of the sea,
  Flashed from the silvery foam.

RONDEL

What voice ye, rolling waves that beat
  And mourn upon the classic shore?
Do ye incessantly repeat,
  "The gods are gone for evermore!"

Would ye have hoary Neptune greet
  Your iterance with kingly roar?
What voice ye, rolling waves that beat
  And mourn upon the classic shore?

Should sea-nymphs with cool vivid feet
  Make of your curves a quivering floor,
Would ye their merry measures meet
  With ardors of the days of yore?
What voice ye, rolling waves that beat
  And mourn upon the classic shore?

LYRICS

THE ORIOLE

In flight through the skies of the early day
  The oriole fitfully gleams,
To rest on the tall elm's yielding spray
  In the leaves and the sun's soft beams.

"You're sweet! You're sweet!" he tenderly sings
  To his mate in her swaying nest,
As he lightly lifts his ebon wings
  From the throbbing gold of his breast.

To his patient call there is no reply
  From the dame, save a timid note;
But she knows her loyal lover is nigh,
  And she ruffles her feathered throat.

On her eggs, purple-flecked and pale as sea-foam,
  Safe hid in her snug dainty bed,
She quietly broods,—from her branch-hung home
  Oft showing her busy brown head.

Again comes the cry, "You're sweet! You're sweet!"
  In mellow tones plaintively clear;
The sober wife stands on her tiny feet,
  And says, with a look, "I am here!"

And after the hungry little-ones six
  Have burst the imprisoning shell,
And he finds them food, by bird-known tricks,
  In pasture and woodland and dell,

"You're sweet! You're sweet!" he joyfully sings
  From his perch near the happy nest,
As he lightly lifts his ebon wings
  From the throbbing gold of his breast.

PURPOSE

Do all you can with life—
Accept its calm, its strife,
  Its griefs, its joys;
Vanquish its doubts, its fears—
Baffle its dreads, its tears,
  Its vague annoys.

To-day the ocean roars,
Lashes its lonely shores,
  On the land leaps—
To-morrow humbled, still,
By its Creator's will
  Conquered, it creeps.

We needs must girded be
With faith, with charity,
  With hope, with love;
Some steady goal must shine—
Some guiding star divine
  Glitter above.

If worldly fame, if wealth,
Be got by deeds of stealth,
  If by deceit—
We miss the precious peace
That aids at life's release
  Death's touch to meet.

When from the earth we go
Where all is shifting show,
  Tentative, vain—
Will wishèd rest begin?
Will the spite pause?—the sin
  Cease and the pain?

THE NIGHT-WIND

Through the black night the wild wind howls and
moans,
And shrieks out madly like a thing in pain—
Strives with sharp gusts and sobs in piteous tones,
With interludes of fiercely beating rain.

And now it simulates half-human sounds—
Low inarticulate utterances of grief,
Hoarse mutterings of despair that know no bounds,
And bursts of passion, vehement, frantic, brief.

I shudder, safely housed, for them that sail
The perilous ocean when the storm is high,
Cruelly harassed by the frenzied gale,
And not a star to cheer them in the sky.

But with the morn rises the golden sun
And shines upon a peaceful, perfect day—
Smiles on the tempest's harmless havoc done,
And on a ship at anchor in the bay.

AUTUMN

Late autumn is sighing
For the changing and dying
Of the tree-clinging embers that linger,
And the aimlessly drifted
Sere dropped leaves uplifted
By the chill wind's invisible finger.

How dun and how dreary
The clouds look! How weary
The bird's slender call from the thicket!
While from under the masses
Of dry tattered grasses
Comes the shrill piercing voice of the cricket.

One lily, unthinking,
Has bloomed, and is shrinking
In fear of the brook's cruel waters,
Which murmur and shiver
And icily quiver
To the last left of Dian's fair daughters.

The empty husks rattle
As the slow patient cattle
Displace them with awkward dull motion,
And through lofty pines yonder
Weird air-currents wander
With a dirge like the echo of ocean.

From far roofs upcurling
Thin smoke is unfurling
In spirals grotesquely inwreathing—
Now falling, now flowing,
In quaint coils on-going,
Like some giant life ceaselessly breathing.

The distance is nearer
And finer and clearer
Unsoftened by hazy blithe shadows,
And even the noon-light
Is cold as the moonlight,
The greenness is gone from the meadows.

With tops downward turning
The gaunt elms are yearning
To the bleak skies in mute supplication,
Like Andromeda moaning
To great Zeus, and groaning
At the chains, and the rock's desolation.

SAVIOUR, MASTER, MAKE ME THINE

Saviour, Master, make me Thine!
I am human, Thou divine.
Burdened with the woes I bear,
Weary with the weight of care,
To Thy sheltering arms I flee:
In Thy bosom comfort me!

When adversity and strife
Wound and desolate my life,
When the lands no blossoms yield
And the hills are unrevealed,
To Thy sheltering arms I flee:
In Thy bosom comfort me!

When the awful thunder-roll
Of the tempest frights my soul,
When my fancied strength is gone,
Lonely, pleading, tearful, wan,
To Thy sheltering arms I flee:
In Thy bosom comfort me!

When the day forsakes the sky,
When the final sleep is nigh,
When the low last words are said,
When the failing breath is fled,
To Thy sheltering Love I flee:
Saviour, Master, comfort me!

MUTABILITY

The house was guestless when I came first time;
Now, it is glad with guests from many a clime:
  Musing, I sigh that such a change should be—
  It saddens me.

Then the stern rooms were desolate and drear;
Now they are jubilant with jest and cheer:
  The mighty difference makes my tears to start—
  It thrills my heart.

Not long we linger in one mood or way;
We should be weary of unceasing day:
  Night with its hush brings ease of fret and care,
  Of din and glare.

If a life vanish from a family flock,
Those left are bruisèd as by blow of rock.
  Gold will nor gild nor blunt nor lessen grief,
  Nor make it brief.

Time is the healer of our troubles all—
His mists encircle in their gradual fall
  And give surcease. When all again is well
  We ring Mirth's bell.

And this is why the house to which I went
First time was guestless—a dear life was spent—
  And now its merry rooms, of sorrow stilled,
  With guests are filled.

THE BLUE-BIRD

A glint of blue flits 'neath the sky,
  Amid the merry May-time;
A living gem, light-winged and shy,
  Enjoying its brief play-time.

Now perched upon an alder-spray
  That bends beneath its lightness,
It gives unto the dewy day
  A soft and sudden brightness.

And from its little throbbing throat
  Comes "Twitter, twitter, twitter!"
A sweet, a swift, a slender note,
  But never one that's bitter.

It is the voice that tells of Spring,
  At rosy dawn and after;
The busy Blue-bird carolling
  A song of love and laughter.

REST

Rest, weary spirit, for the day is here,
The glancing of the leafy spray is near,
The land is luminous, the way is clear.
  Rest, weary spirit, rest.

Rest, weary spirit, for the night is done,
The wing that frees thee for the flight is won,
The thread that leads thee to the light is spun.
  Rest, weary spirit, rest.

Rest, weary spirit, God is nigh to thee,
He beckons from beyond the sky to thee,
Even now His happy angels cry to thee.
  Rest, weary spirit, rest.

Rest, weary spirit, precious rest is thine,
The shelter of thy Saviour's breast is thine,
The doing of His dear behest is thine.
Rest, weary spirit, rest.

DROWNED

They were seen to go down to the river,
The lad and the laughing boy-child:
Its waters, with sunshine a-quiver,
Were level and rippled and mild.

As the light from the long day was creeping,
"Where is Willie?" the fond mother said!
Ah me! the wild wailing and weeping
When she knew that her darling was dead!

For we found on the stream idly drifting
A boat with its keel in the air,
And near it the ripples were lifting
The cap that had pressed the child's hair.

And cold, 'mid the grasses and cresses
That tangled the river's dim floor,
Close-clasped in each other's caresses
Were the two that went down to the shore.

VILLANELLES

IN VILLANELLES I LOVE TO SING

In Villanelles I love to sing
  When vivid fancies flash and play
And make the merry love-bells ring.

When blue-birds whistle on the wing
  And give their gladness to the day
In Villanelles I love to sing.

When busy brooks their foam-beads fling
  I listen to their roundelay
And make the merry love-bells ring.

When grasses from their rootlets bring
  The green that vivifies the gray
In Villanelles I love to sing.

Amid their minor murmuring
  I love to linger and to stray
And make the merry love-bells ring.

When every sleeping sentient thing
  Is wakened in a wondrous way
In Villanelles I love to sing
And make the merry love-bells ring.

WHEN NIGHT IS COME UPON THE SEA

When night is come upon the sea,
  And shadows congregate the shore,
Immensity bewilders me.

And, swayed to spirit, I am free
  Beyond the journeying world to soar,
When night is come upon the sea.

Empowered by some august decree,
  I walk the sky's majestic floor—
Immensity bewilders me.

Around me splendid systems flee,
  Creation greatens more and more,
When night is come upon the sea.

It seems so strange that I should be
  So far, yet hear the billows roar!
Immensity bewilders me.

I watch, with neither grief nor glee,
  The cold stars glitter as before.
When night is come upon the sea,
Immensity bewilders me.

QUATRAINS

SHELLEY

He sent out paper boats on the rough lake,
And watched them from the shore with childlike glee.
How odd that he that last dim sail should take
To find Poseidon 'neath the swirling sea!

KEATS

I

Each word he wrote dripped with his great heart's blood,
Earth joy-thought had a sorrow in its tone;
Briefly he revelled in brave poesy's flood—
Death found him ere his marvellous youth was flown.

II

He dipped his pen in flowers various-hued,
We feel the color in each verse he wrote;
As daisies mostly on his page he strewed,
Over his mound their tutelar spirits float.

We say we shall not die,
And yet we know each breath,
Each laugh, each sob, each sigh,
Is omnipresent death.

Your life is yours to make or mar,
Your life is yours for good or ill.
Though powerless to touch a star,
You have the power to climb a hill.

Better one word of kindness to your friend
While you with him the pleasant earth-paths wend,
  Than a whole volume of unhelpful praise
  When he has utterly vanished from your gaze.

FAILURE

What most we do is to anticipate—
  To plan is easy, but to act is hard.
I often think to open yonder gate,
  But fail to cross the separating yard.

EQUIPMENT

No two there are of the same mental weight—
  This fact by stern experience we know.
The man who is equipped to guide a State
  May fail if he attempt to guide a hoe.

COWPER

Till Cowper sang the sofa's praise,
Distressed and tortured were his days;
  But from the lamp of rhythmic toil,
  Came sweet contentment's healing oil.

NIOBE

Niobe, the inconsolable, I dreamed I met—
  Her hair was a white gray:
Her pale and tenuous and pathetic lips were set
  In a severe, Greek way.

Often my friend appalls me when we meet
By his immoderate, superb conceit.
I stand aghast at the audacious glance
Of his unparalleled insouciance.

The poet should his work begin
With doubting hand and prayerful heart:
His only thought should be to win
The perfect touch of perfect art.

In life he was unscrupulous, cruel, base,
He had for pity in his heart no room.
A man equipped with every Christian grace!—
Is the carved irony on his costly tomb.

Rash Phaëthon who strove to drive the sun,
And by his boastful folly was undone,
Deserves less pity than to him is given
Who only fails because he has not striven.

STEVENSON

Alone he stood on a lonely height
That shadowed the Southern sea,
Wearied of time, and touched with the light
Of a near eternity.

How marvellous the stem that day by day
  Holds the drooped lily in its graceful poise!
How kind the wind that lingers on its way
  And lifts the lily-leaves and with them toys!

Whichever way we look the mind is there,
  It gives its color to each thing we see;
From its quick touch the sky is foul or fair,
  Leaf-stripped or bravely foliaged the tree.

THOUGHT

If thought be high Time is annihilate,
  The fatal precious moments do not flit:
No knowledge have we if we walk or wait,
  We are unmindful if we stand or sit.